

Canada's Folk, Roots and World Music Magazine

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penguin eggs

Dyad

Jeff
Tweedy

*"I don't
think
there is
anybody
left that makes
true folk music."*

The Be Good Tanyas

Sam Parton photo essay: Ozark Mountain Baptist luthier

Old Crow Medicine Show

WOMAD 2006

Lennie Gallant

Eliseo Parra

Salt

Gene MacLellan

Hot Toddy

Tom Wilson

Serre l'Écoute

Plus news & reviews

Issue No. 31
Autumn 2006



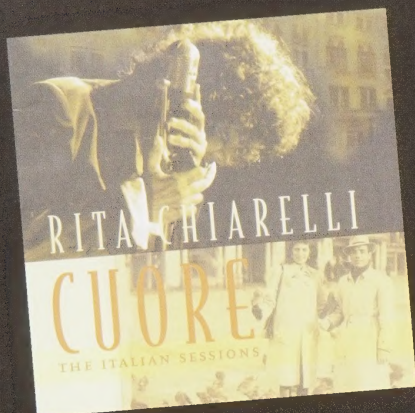
Win Old Crow Medicine Show's Big Iron World — And more inside



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a new CD from Rita Chiarelli



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- Heather McCleod, CBC Radio

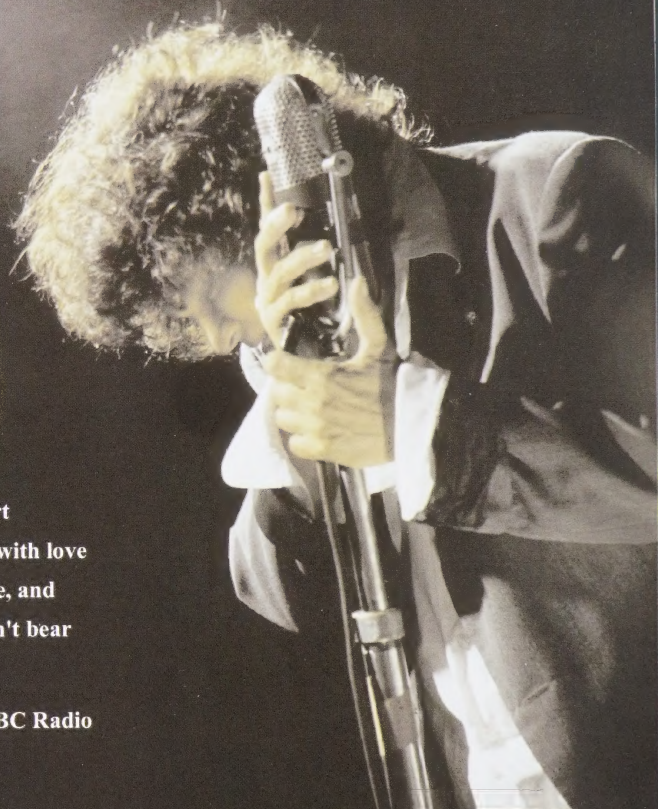
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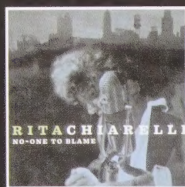
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Watch for the re-issue of
Rita's 1997 CD Road Rockets
coming in 2007

Cover story

38 . . . Old-time mountain music appears on the brink of a revival. Dyad certainly give credence to the case with their masterful, all-acoustic, bare essentials new release *No Pedlars, No Preachers*.

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Quotable

"I don't think there is anybody left, honestly, that really makes true folk music. I think the term has become so far removed from what it was really intended. I don't know what anybody would accurately call or describe folk music anymore."

— Jeff Tweedy

"Take Parry Sound, for example. Bands don't go there. Why would they? It's not a great town. Nobody lives there except for some old, weird people."

— Ketch Secor of Old Crow Medicine Show

"Usually when the Indian side of the family came down to visit us from Quebec they brought down guitars and ukes, but usually it ended up in drinking and fighting."

— Tom Wilson

Sheet Music

69 . . . *North Coast Fisher Wife's Prayer* by Phyllis Sinclair

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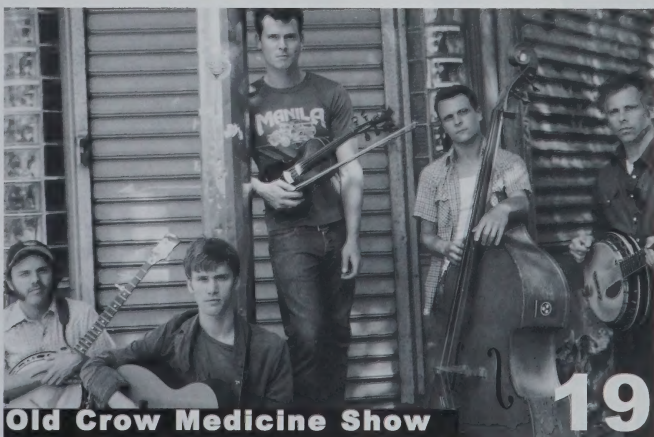
The Be Good Tanyas



Jeff Tweedy



Ozark Photo Essay



Old Crow Medicine Show

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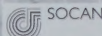
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
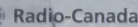
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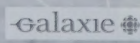
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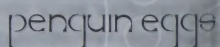
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Shawn Colvin

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Thompson and Greg Leisz.



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Canada's Folk, Roots
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This magazine takes its name from Nic Jones' wonderful album *Penguin Eggs*—a collection of mainly traditional British folk songs revitalized with extraordinary flair and ingenuity. Released in Britain in 1980, it has grown into a source of inspiration for such young, gifted performers as Kate Rusby and Eliza Carthy.

Nic, sadly, suffered horrific injuries in a car crash in 1982 and has never fully recovered. He now seldom performs. His care and respect shown for the tradition and prudence to recognize the merits of innovation makes *Penguin Eggs* such an outrageously fine recording. This magazine strives to reiterate that spirit. Nic Jones' *Penguin Eggs* is available through Topic Records.

Penguin Eggs is published and printed in Canada and acknowledges the generous financial support from the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program and the Canada Magazine Fund toward our mailing, editorial and production costs.



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Canada

editorial

About the only letters sent our way are complaints about record reviews. How I wish for a debate that would alienate half the known universe. But missives from disgruntled recipients – targets of cutting remarks, mostly – appear our lot.

In the current issue of *Sing Out!*, editor Mark Moss describes how he refuses to run, "this is crap," reviews. He argues there is not enough space to write thoughtful criticisms of all the "good to great records," never mind diss inferior ones. It's an honest, well-meaning, and fairly common policy in specialty magazines.

But there are always records that deserve a good kicking. Bob Dylan's *Self Portrait* anyone? Or how about Dick Gaughan's *Faithful For Tomorrow?* The Pogues' *Waiting for Herb*, perhaps?

Long distinguished careers do not produce masterpieces ad infinitum. In fact, successful artists tend to take considerable more chances with their music. The results can vary. Joni Mitchell's a prime example. Her stark, engaging a cappella *Fiddle And The Drum* on her debut *Clouds* bears absolutely no resemblance to the overly pretentious *I's A Muggin'* on *Mingus*, twenty-odd years later. To not chronicle such inconsistencies amounts to a derelict of duty.

An informed, well-written review ought to serve three simultaneous functions. It entertains. It provides the artist with an unbiased, critical analysis of their work. Most important still, it serves as a consumer guide for the record-buying public. And they have so much to choose from now as modern technology allows any Dick, Jane or Spot to make a CD.

We are inundated here at Penguin Eggs with new releases. Like *Sing Out!*, we cannot possibly review everything that comes our way. Every recording receives a listen, however. And yes, there's a certain amount of 'ignore them and they might go away' to the initial cull. The discs then sent to our reviewers fit several categories. Mostly they are from interesting but-not-quite-there-yet-up-and-comers, established artists, and essential new discoveries.

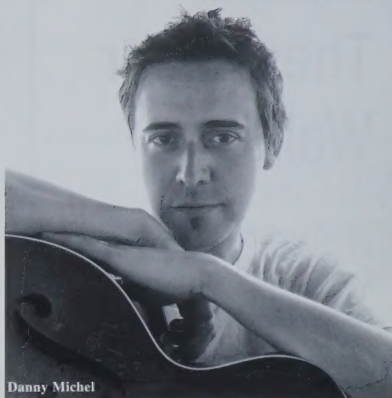
Critics, though, are an odd lot. What I might consider important or drive sometimes comes back with opposite opinions. The cards fall where they may. And sometimes it's not pretty. But if the alternative is a pre-set policy of reviewing only the "good and the great," what's the point? The outcome for the reader is already pre-ordained. The ability to write a no-holds-barred criticism is essential for the well-being of this magazine and its readers. And I'll set Tim Readman on anyone that begs to differ.

– By Roddy Campbell

ckua's top 20

The most-played folk, roots and world-discs on ckua radio - www.ckua.org - throughout June and July

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1. The McDades | Bloom | (Independent) |
| 2. Danny Michel | Valhalla | (Universal) |
| 3. Kinnie Starr | Anything | (Universal) |
| 4. Peter Mulvey | Knuckleball Suite | (True North) |
| 5. Johnny Cash | Personal File | (Columbia) |
| 6. Elvis Costello & Allen Toussaint | The River In Reverse | (Universal) |
| 7. Various Artists | 30 Years of Stony Plain | (Stony Plain) |
| 8. The Wailin' Jennys | Firecracker | (Jericho Beach) |
| 9. The Audreys | Between Last Night And Us | (True North) |
| 10. Regina Spektor | Begin To Hope | (Sire) |
| 11. The Waybacks | From Pasture To Future | (Compass) |
| 12. Feist | Open Season | (Arts & Crafts) |
| 13. Various Artists | Alberta Wild Roses... | (Smithsonian...) |
| 14. Amadou & Mariam | Dimanche a Bamako | (Warner Bros) |
| 15. Amy Millan | Honey From The Tombs | (Arts & Crafts) |
| 16. Jim Byrnes | House Of Refuge | (Black Hen) |
| 17. Paul Simon | Surprise | (Warner Bros) |
| 18. Bruce Cockburn | Life Short Call Now | (True North) |
| 19. Gotan Project | Lunatico | (Interchill) |
| 20. Kane, Welch & Caplin | Lost John Dean | (Compass) |



Danny Michel

soundscapes' top 10

Compiled from June and July sales at Soundscapes, 572 College St., Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1B3

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Beirut | Gulag Orkestar | (Ba Da Bing) |
| 2. Various Artists | Jamaica To Toronto | (Light In The Attic) |
| 3. Johnny Cash | American V | (Lost Highway) |
| 4. Ron Sexsmith | Time Being | (Warners) |
| 5. Juana Molina | Son | (Domino) |
| 6. FM3 | Buddha Machine | (FM3) |
| 7. Vetiver | To Find Me Gone | (Fat Cat) |
| 8. Various Artists | Soul Gospel II | (Soul Jazz) |
| 9. Neko Case | Fox Confessor... | (Mint) |
| 10. Seu Jorge | Original Life Aquatic... | (Sony) |

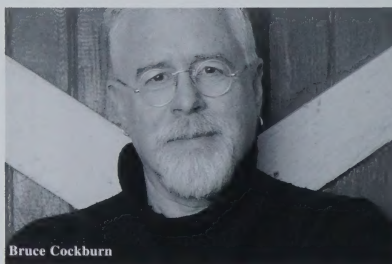


Ron Sexsmith

sam's top 15

Compiled from June and July sales at Sam The Record Man 1656 Barrington Street, Halifax, NS.

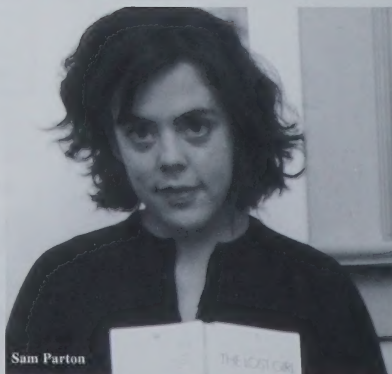
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|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Various Artists | Atlantic Standards | (WEA) |
| 2. Dixie Chicks | Taking The Long Way Home | (Sony) |
| 3. Johnny Cash | American V | (Lost Highway) |
| 4. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris | All The Roadrunning | (Mercury) |
| 5. Bruce Springsteen | The Seeger Sessions | (Columbia) |
| 6. Ron Sexsmith | Time Being | (Warners) |
| 7. Various Artists | Failite: A Cape Breton Welcome | (Independent) |
| 8. Old Man Luedecke | Hinterland | (Independent) |
| 9. Elvis Costello & Allen Toussaint | The River In Reverse | (Universal) |
| 10. Bruce Cockburn | Life Short Call Now | (True North) |



Bruce Cockburn

sam parton's all-time top 15 albums

- | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Jan Bell & Melissa Carper | Songs For My Baby | (Independent) |
| Bill Bourne & Shannon Johnson | Dear Madonna | (Independent) |
| Michael Jerome Brown | Michael Jerome Brown | (Borealis) |
| Ry Cooder | Boomer's Story | (Warners) |
| Sandy Denny | No More Sad Refrains | (AAM) |
| Hazel Dickens & Alice Gerrard | Hazel & Alice | (Rounder) |
| Fraser & DeBolt | With Ian Guenther | (Columbia) |
| Freakwater | Old Paint | (Thrill Jockey) |
| Gerry Garcia & David Grisman | Shady Grove | (Acoustic Disc) |
| Michael Hurley | Snockgrass | (Rounder) |
| Taj Mahal | De Old Folks/Giant Step | (Columbia) |
| Kate & Anna McGarrigle | Matapedia | (Warners) |
| The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band | Will The Circle Be Unbroken | (United Artists) |
| Pentangle | Early Classics | (Shanachie) |



Sam Parton

sillon's top 10

1. Amadou & Mariam
2. Agnès Jaoui
3. Cat Power
4. Céu
5. Bia
6. Marco Calliari
7. Nuevo Quadro
8. Ali Farka Toure
9. Lila Downs
10. Bruce Springsteen

Compiled from June and July sales at Sillon
Le Disquaire, 1149 Avenue Cartier, Québec,
Québec, G1R 2S9

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Dimanche a Bamako | (Warner Bros) |
| Canta | (Warner Bros) |
| The Greatest | (Matador) |
| Céu | (Six Degrees) |
| Coeur Vagabond | (Fusion III) |
| Che La Vita | (Independent) |
| Mocca Flor | (Justin Time) |
| Savane | (Nonesuch) |
| Cantina | (Narada) |
| The Seeger Sessions | (Columbia) |

fred's top 10

1. Duane Andrews
2. Great Big Sea
3. Ron Hynes
4. Ron Hynes
5. ShaneyGanock
6. Darcy Broderick
7. Sherry Ryan
8. Duane Andrews
9. El Viento Flamenco
10. Ed Kavanagh

Compiled from June and July sales at Fred's
Records, 198 Duckworth St., St John's, NF, A1C
1G5

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| Crocus | (Independent) |
| The Hard & The Easy | (Warner Bros) |
| Face The Gale | (EMI) |
| Ron Hynes | (Borealis) |
| Set You Free | (Avondale) |
| By Request | (Independent) |
| Bottom of a Heart | (Ryan) |
| Duane Andrews | (Independent) |
| In Concert | (Independent) |
| Weaving The Wind | (Warner) |

highlife top 10

1. Michael Franti
2. Thievery Corporation
3. Toumani Diabate...
4. Ali Farka Toure
5. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris
6. Ska Cubano
7. Gotan Project
8. Neko Case
9. Sinéad O'Connor
10. Kal

Compiled from June and July sales at
Highlife Records, 1317 Commercial Drive,
Vancouver, BC, V5L 3X5

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Yell Fire | (Boo Boo Wax) |
| Versions | (ESC) |
| Boulevard de l'Indépendance | (Nonesuch) |
| Savane | (Nonesuch) |
| All The Roadrunning | (Mercury) |
| Ay Caramba | (Comancha) |
| Lunatico | (Interchill) |
| Fox Confessor... | (Mint) |
| Throw Down Your Arms | (AJM) |
| Kal | (Gema) |

megatunes' top 10

1. Mark Knopfler & Emmylou Harris
2. Various Artists
3. The Little Willies
4. Jenny Lewis & The Watson Twins
5. James Hunter
6. Neko Case
7. Bruce Springsteen
8. Neil Young
9. Various Artists
10. Alejandro Escovedo

Compiled from June and July sales at
Megatunes, 10355 Whyte Ave. Edmonton, AB,
T2T 0A2

- | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| All The Roadrunning | (Mercury) |
| Sorrow Bound | (Ruby Moon) |
| The Little Willies | (Milkling Bull) |
| Rabbit Fur Coat | (Team Love) |
| People Gonna Talk | (Rounder) |
| Fox Confessor... | (Mint) |
| The Seeger Sessions | (Columbia) |
| Living With War | (Warners) |
| 30 Years of Stony Plain | (Stony Plain) |
| The Boxing Mirror | (Rough Trade) |

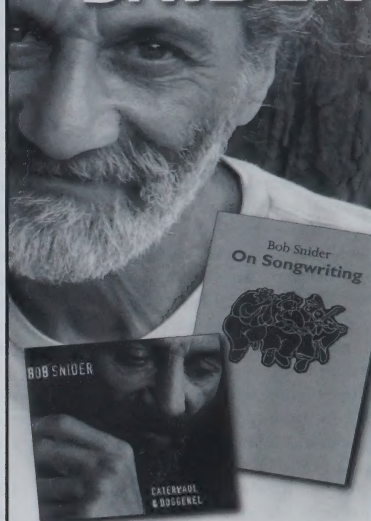
hmv's top 15

Compiled from all June and July sales at HMV
stores across Canada

1. Johnny Cash
2. Ani DiFranco
3. k.d. lang
4. Corb Lund
5. Gipsy Kings
6. The Wallin' Jennys
7. Corb Lund
8. B.B. King
9. Various Artists
10. Buena Vista Social Club
11. Various Artists
12. Ali Farka Toure
13. Céu
14. Various Artists
15. Amadou & Mariam

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| American V | (Lost Highway) |
| Reprieve | (Righteous Babe) |
| Hymns of the 49th Parallel | (Warners) |
| Hair In My Eyes... | (Stony Plain) |
| Greatest Hits | (Warners) |
| Firecracker | (Jericho Beach) |
| Five Dollar Bill | (Stony Plain) |
| 80 | (Geffen) |
| Alberta Wild Roses... | (Smithsonian...) |
| Buena Vista Social Club | (World Circuit) |
| Putumayo Presents Paris | (Putumayo) |
| Savane | (Nonesuch) |
| Céu | (Six Degrees) |
| Putumayo Presents France | (Putumayo) |
| Dimanche a Bamako | (Warner Bros) |

BOB SNIDER



"We LOVE Bob Snider."

STEVEN PAGE, BARENAKED LADIES

Caterwaul & Doggerel

Considered by many to be a national treasure, Bob Snider has been called one of Canada's best songwriters. Produced in 1995, this timeless recording has just been re-released by Borealis with updated liner notes.

FEATURES THE SONGS
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On Songwriting

Snider gives us a glimpse of the songwriter's inner workings – the creative process, tips and techniques and how to bring good ideas out of hiding.

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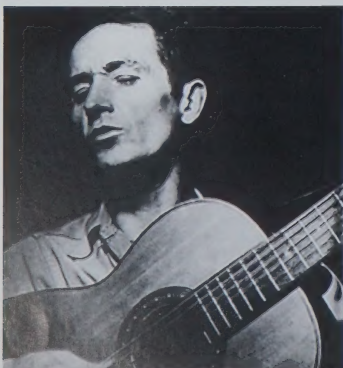
The Six String Nation Guitar made its public debut in the hands of **Stephen Fearing**, Canada Day, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

As much a national musical museum as a guitar, the body largely consists of Golden Spruce cut from a 300-year-old tree revered by the Haida-Gwaii of British Columbia. It also incorporates 63 other colourful artifacts from Canadian history. They include pieces of wood from former prime minister **Pierre Trudeau's** canoe paddles, **Wayne Gretzky** and **Paul Henderson's** hockey sticks, the St. Boniface museum where **Louis Riel** went to school, a gold dot from Montreal Canadian **Maurice Richard's** Stanley Cup ring, decking from the schooner *Bluenose II* and a piece of the oldest rock in the world, found near Great Bear Lake.

The guitar is the brainchild of CBC Radio host Jowi Taylor, who on the eve of the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty, got the idea of pulling together stories from across Canada as a symbol of national unity.

He enlisted the help of luthier George Rizsanyi, who built the guitar in his workshop near Pinehurst, NS. It took almost 10 years to gather the material but only three months for Rizsanyi to assemble the guitar.

Fearing performed his song *The Longest Road* during the Canada Day celebrations. It has since been played by **Bruce Cockburn**, **The Wailin' Jennys**, **James Keelaghan**, **Feist** and **Madagascar Slim**.



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Woody Guthrie

Quality masters of almost 160 lost **Woody Guthrie** recordings have resurfaced in Brooklyn, New York City. They include at least three never-heard-before songs and the first recording of Guthrie's *This Land is Your Land*. The songs were initially recorded for the long-dormant Stinson Record label, once owned by the late Bob Harris.

Harris's widow, Irene, gave the entire Stinson catalogue to a friendly neighbour in 2004. Through various contacts word of the songs eventually reached **Peter Frumkin**, who was in the final stages of work on his documentary *Woody Guthrie: Ain't Got No Home*.

The metal wire recordings — an audio storage system that predates tape and was used widely during the 1940s — are supposedly in pristine condition.

"Everyone who hears them, their jaws drop," Frumkin told the *Boston Globe*. "The sound is so clean. People have told me that the only way to hear clearer versions of these songs would be to have been sitting there in the studio 60 years ago."

Frumkin has used six of the Stinson recordings in his film. A team of historians, archivists, representatives from the Woody Guthrie Foundation and the Library of Congress, and record label executives are planning the future of the Stinson catalog, which also includes recordings by **Leadbelly**, **Burl Ives**, **Josh White**, **Sonny Terry**, **James P. Johnson**, **Art Tatum**, and **Cisco Houston**. A multi-album deal is in the works with Cambridge, MA, based Rounder Records plans to release the first compilation next January.

Corb Lund received two gold records July 12 for his 2002 Stony Plain release, *Five Dollar Bill*, as well as for last year's *Hair In My Eyes Like A Highland Steer* — which won the Juno in April for Roots & Traditional Album of the Year. Its guests include **Ramblin' Jack Elliott** (*The Truck Got Stuck Talkin' Blues*) and **Ian Tyson** (*The Rodeo's Over*). A gold record celebrates 50,000 sales of a disc in Canada. Lund, who travels to most of his Canadian and US dates in a converted milk deliv-



Corb Lund

ery truck with his band **The Hurtin' Albertans**, plays well over 250 dates a year.

Stony Plain's **Holger Petersen** said: "Corb seems to outline the Canadian experience — especially for those of us who live in Western Canada. Audiences relate both to his songs and the band's great live performances."

Still with Stony Plain artists **Ian Tyson** and **Duke Robillard**; Tyson's classic *Four Strong Winds* appears on **Johnny Cash's** swansong, *American V: A Hundred Highways*. Produced by **Rick Rubin**, it shot to the top of the Billboard album charts when it was released, and has been critically reviewed. Robillard joined **Tom Waits's** band for a nine-date August tour of the US.

"I've always dug Tom's material, and so much of it is deeply rooted in the blues," said Robillard. "That, plus the fact that Tom's one of the most fun guys in the world, made me jump at the chance to work with him." Robillard's most recent CD for Stony Plain, *Guitar Groove-a-Rama*, has spent two months at No. 2 on the Living Blues Blues Chart.

Jane Siberry changed her name to **Issa**, June 3. "I just felt that there was a sense of completion for Jane Siberry and that it was time to go in a new direction," she told local newspapers before playing the Canmore Folk Festival. Issa, however, will continue to play Jane Siberry's music.

"I was feeling like I wanted to simplify everything around me. I'm just trying to follow the flow I feel in my life, wherever it takes me. I have a knapsack, I guess that is the closest thing I have to a home... I've just been trying [Issa] out for a while and it feels good. It's simpler and pretty."

Ron Hynes received the St. John's Folk Arts Council Lifetime Achievement Award for 2006 for his continuing contribution to the musical traditions of Newfoundland & Labrador. Hynes received his award August 5th at the Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival in Bannerman Park, St. John's. Hynes began his career as a singer-song-



The artist formerly known as Jane Siberry

Autumn
2006

penguin eggs

news ... gossip ... rumour ... tattle

writer in the early seventies, playing the coffee-house circuit throughout Atlantic Canada and Ontario. In 1976 he wrote *Sonny's Dream*, which was later recorded by the likes of **Emmylou Harris** and **Hamish Imlach**. Hynes songs have also been covered by the likes of **Christy Moore**, **Mary Black** and **Murray McLaughlin**. Last December, Hynes launched his long-awaited first songbook, *Songs of Ron Hynes-Volume 1*, which is published by Vinland Music. The St. John's Folk Arts Council is a not-for-profit organization with a mandate to promote the Folk Arts in Newfoundland and Labrador.

True North Records founder, **Bernie Finkelstein** and Cape Breton fiddler **Natalie McMaster** were both appointed members of the Order of Canada July 25. The announcement was made by the Right Honourable **Michaëlle Jean**, Governor General of Canada. The Order of Canada recognizes outstanding achievement and service in various fields of human endeavour. Finkelstein also received the prestigious **Walt Grealis** Special Achievement Award at the Junos in Halifax last April.

Kelowna, BC, based **Andrew Smith** joins the likes of **Lyle Lovett**, **Steve Earle** and **Shawn Colvin** as a winner of the prestigious Kerrville New Folk Competition. In May, Smith beat out almost 800 other contestants and was the only Canadian, among 32 finalists, chosen to perform at the festival in Kerrville, TX. Smith won on the strength of his two songs, *Rite of Passage* and *Holes in the Night Sky*. The New Folk Competition was established in 1972 by **Peter Yarrow** of **Peter, Paul and Mary**. Smith will tour his latest release, *Escape Velocity*, throughout New England and eastern Canada this fall.

Geoff Berner has a new accordion instructional

booklet for sale, *How To Be An Accordion Player*. According to the author, it "shows the reader the path to accordion greatness, using clear language, a scientific approach to learning, and pithy illustrative anecdotes about family members, the Saskatchewan Legislature Building, and **Shaka Zulu**, to name but a few." It's published by The Kolakovsky Press and available through Festival Distribution or from the Berner's website, www.geoffberner.com.

Beverlie Robertson has completed *With Knowing Eyes: Canadian Women in Song* – a songbook with notes by the late **Edith Fowke**. It is published by Brandy Creek Music & Publications and is available from Pandora Press in Kitchener, ON. *Knowing Eyes*... offers a collection of traditional and contemporary folk songs reflecting women's lives in Canada. It contains lyrics, music, chords, notes and a discography. The purpose and concept of the book, she says, is two-fold: it's full of folksongs for women to sing and it presents a picture of developing life in Canada from a woman's viewpoint. Robertson is available for workshops, and concerts based on the book. She can be reached at folkie@muskoka.com

Medicine Hat Folk Music Club will host Alberta's first winter folk festival, January 27, 2007, at Medicine Hat College. Cheekily subtitled 'Tongue on the Post,' the festival's initial bill consists of such noted Alberta artists as **John Wort Hannam**, **The McDades** and **Karla Anderson**. For more information go to www.mhfolkmusic.com. Hannam, who won the Calgary Folk Music Festival's annual Best Performance Song 2006 competition for his *Digger's Lament*, will record his third album in September in Vancouver with **Steve Dawson** producing.

The Old Chestnuts Song Circle, the Registry Theatre and the Mill Race Folk Society, will co-present a series of concerts in downtown Kitchener, ON, starting this fall. All concerts are to take place at The Registry Theatre, 122 Frederick St. Individual concerts range in price from \$12 to \$17, and a full series pass is \$78. Tickets are available from **Jack Cole** (519-578-6298, jhcole@mgl.ca) or Twelfth Night Music in Waterloo and Guelph. Artists booked to date include **Eileen McGann** (October 14); a benefit for the Mill Race Folk Society (November 11); **Eve Goldberg** with **Bob MacLean** (January 26); **Midnight Clear**, **Glen Souls** and **Norman Liota** (February 2); **Steel Rail** with **Jay Linden** (March 10); and **Haines & Leighton** with **GreenWood** (April 21). The April concert will celebrate the memory of local folk music icon **Merrick Jarrett** and funds will go towards promoting folk music in the Waterloo region. It will be used for school concerts and similar events administered by the Old Chestnuts Song Circle.

For more information about Folk Night and similar events in the Kitchener area, visit www.grandriverfolk.org.

Vancouver's Big City Productions has become the booking agent for England's self-professed professional idiot, poet and songwriter, **Les Barker**. Barker joins **Jez Lowe**, **Vin Garbutt** and the **Arrogant Worms** as clients of the company. Barker will be touring the USA and Canada in November 2006 and June/July 2007. For more information visit <http://www.mrsackroyd.com> or www.timreadman.com.

Canadian label Jnana Records has compiled a five CD set to benefit Doctors Without Borders in their fight against the AIDS epidemic in Africa. In total, 86 artists crossing many musical boundaries,



Eve Goldberg



Geoff Berner



Natalie McMaster

penguin eggs 9



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Manitoba Hal

have each donated a track, among them Canadian roots musicians **NQ Arbuckle**, **Lynn Jackson**, **Luke Doucet**, **Shannon Lyon** and **Sarah Hallman**. Since its release in March 2006, sales of the set have enabled the label to donate upwards of \$15,000. The discs are available from national record shops and the label's website, www.jnanarecords.com, for \$25.00.

Crossroads Blues is a new Quebec-based online magazine that aims to support and promote the blues. Founded by musicians **Kevin Mark** and **Dale Boyle**, it will feature monthly interviews with songwriters involved in recording and promoting original material, as well as individuals dedicated to supporting the blues – such as radio hosts or festival organizers. The site includes a blues photo gallery and a mixed bag of news, and events. Since its debut in April, Crossroads Blues has covered Juno-winning **Jack de Keyser**, **Stevie Ray Vaughan** bassist **Tommy Shannon**, and the multi-award-winning **Sue Foley**. Future editions will feature artists such as guitarist **David GoGo** and 2006 Blues Album of the Year Juno winner, **Kenny "Blues Boss" Wayne**. For more information visit www.crossroadsblues.com

Celebrated Toronto-based keyboard player **Richard Bell**, who has recorded and performed with the likes of **Janis Joplin**, **The Band** and **Blackie and the Rodeo Kings**, is critically ill in a Toronto hospital. At the time of writing, no diagnosis had been confirmed but lung cancer is suspected. Guests to Bell's hospital bedside have included **Janiva Magness**, who dropped by after her first Toronto appearance in thirty years at the Beaches International Jazz Festival. Bell played keyboards on both her albums for Northern Blues

Records. He also recently recorded with the likes of **Roxanne Potvin**, **Treassa Levasseur**, **Paul Reddick** and **Colin Linden**.

Drummer **Billy Bryans**, a founding member of **The Parachute Club** and a prime mover in the worldmusic scene in Toronto, has been diagnosed with lung cancer and is currently too sick to work. Bryans has produced records for the likes of **Punjabi By Nature** and **Tarig Abubakar** and promoted shows featuring such international artists as **Sally Nyolo** (Cameron), **Sierra Maestra**, **La Charanga Habanera** (Cuba) and **Wasis Diop** (Senegal). He has also performed with the **Downchild Blues Band** and **The AfroNubians** and is one of the resident DJs at Toronto's **Lula Lounge**, 585 Dundas St. West. Friends there have organised a benefit concert for Bryans, August 20.

Ida Nilsen, from the Vancouver-based quartet **Great Aunt Ida**, heads to the UK in September to record with **Mike Scott** and **The Waterboys** on their new, as yet untitled, recording. Scott had heard Ida's cover of his *Fisherman's Blues* and requested a copy. They subsequently recorded together in Vancouver and she has continued writing with them. The album has a scheduled release date for early February. **Great Aunt Ida** also has a new disc, *How They Fly*, set for a September 19 release on Northern Electric Records. She will then head out on a national tour after returning from the U.K.

Manitoba Hal and **Doc MacLean** set out on a 40-date "Trans Canada Blues Tour" in September. It's MacLean's first national tour since the 1970s. Both release new discs in advance of this trip.

Maclean's, *Narrow House* – set for release September 15, is produced by **Colin Linden** and features **Larry Taylor**, **Stephen Hodges**, **Fats Kaplin**, **Rev Joe Rice** and **Michael Pickett** among others. Manitoba's, *Come the Ruination*, should appear around the same time. For tour details visit www.manitobahal.com or www.doc-maclean.com

The Georgian Bay Folk Society has announced the appointment of **Richard Knechtel** as the new Artistic Director of the Summerfolk Music and Crafts Festival for 2007-08. Knechtel, a professional musician from Walkerton, Ontario has been involved with the festival since its inception in 1976. Current Artistic Director **Liz Harvey-Foulds** will oversee the 2006 event with Knechtel serving as her assistant. She will now concentrate on programming Live From The Rock Folk Festival in Thunder Bay, ON.

Scotland's Greentrax Records celebrated its 20th anniversary with a concert at Edinburgh's Queen's Hall, July 22, with performances from the likes of **The McCalmans** and **Fiddlers' Bid**. Greentrax head, **Ian Green**, received an Honorary Doctor Of Music from The Academic Board of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama at a ceremony held on July 4. Comedian **Billy Connolly** and singer **Annie Lennox** also received degrees that day. Green said: "I am deeply honoured to receive... this tribute to my work in Scottish traditional music during the past 40 years. The award comes on the 20th Anniversary of Greentrax and, by coincidence, the Golden Wedding Anniversary year of my wife **June** and myself. There is so much to celebrate this year."



I am a DJ – I am what I play

Jan Vanderhorst celebrates 25 years of broadcasting **Just Us Folk** from Brantford, ON. A one-hour program, **Just Us Folk** is devoted to contemporary and traditional folk, singer-songwriters, acoustic blues and bluegrass. Since 1981, the show has highlighted new and established performers and boasts a long guest list that includes **Garnet Rogers**, **Fred Eaglesmith**, **Dave Clarke** and **The Ennis Sisters**. Throughout the year Jan travels to folk festivals to interview performers such as **David Francey**, **Eliza Gilkyson**, **J.P. Cormier**, **Tanglefoot** and **Harry Manx** and discusses their craft and allows these brilliant artists to tell their stories. Jan plans to celebrate his milestone by hosting his own house concert in with **Tannis Slimmon** and **Lewis Melville**.



Jan Vanderhorst

Just Us Folk airs Sunday nights from 6 - 7 p.m. EDT on CKPC-FM 92. It can also be heard worldwide on the internet at <http://ckpcfm.com/home.php>. PC-FM 92.1

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Old Crow Medicine Show are among the new breed of young string-band musicians redefining American roots music. They are inspired by everything from punk, jug bands, and Memphis blues. They made their Grand Ole Opry debut at the Ryman Auditorium in 2001. They've appeared in several documentaries: PBS's American Roots Music series; In the Valley Where Time Stands Still, a film about the history of the Renfro Valley Barn Dance; and Bluegrass Journey, a portrait of contemporary bluegrass. *Big Iron World* is their wonderful fifth album. And much thanks to the kindness of those nice people at Nettwerk Records, we have six copies of it to give away. To win one, all you have to do is answer correctly the following three questions and e-mail your answer to penguineggs1@shaw.ca. Please don't forget to include a postal address.

- Q1: Which contributor to the O'Brother Where Art Thou? soundtrack plays drums on *Big Iron World*?
- Q2: Who booked them to perform at the big U.S. bluegrass festival, Merlefest?
- Q3: Which country star helped them when they arrived in Nashville?

Answers to the 30 Years of Stony Plain contest are: Q1: Ian Tyson's *Cowboyography* Q2: North Vancouver 3: Natch'l Blues on CKUA

And the winners are: Michael Carter, Nelson, BC; Rodney Hughes, Vermillion, AB; Heather Kitching, Vancouver, BC; Pat Battles, Victoria, BC; Karen Welk, Ft. McMurray, AB, and Lynn Andrews (Lynn could you contact us please?)

Paul Nelson 1934-2006

The US critic Paul Nelson's writing and editing career included stints at *Circus*, *Musician*, *Rolling Stone*, *Sing Out!* and *The Village Voice*. He wrote insightfully about a range of acts and was even inveigled into speaking in Martin Scorsese's *No Direction Home* (2005) documentary on Dylan.

Nelson hailed from Warren, MN, and attended the University of Minnesota where he roomed next door to John Pankake, another fellow bitten by the folk bug. In 1961 they founded the *Little Sandy Review*, a folk magazine of iconic status (though few ever actually held a copy). They were motivated by the possibility of getting free review copies. It ran for 30 issues. Nelson had run into Bobby Zimmerman, as he was still known, whilst he was doing Harry Belafonte, Odetta and Josh White covers. In an issue dated circa 1962 (reprinted in *The Dylan Companion* (2001)), Pankake and Nelson spoke of meeting him in the summer of 1960. He was then "a promising member of a group of singers who performed at a local coffee house called the Ten O'Clock Scholar". They hooked up with the renamed Bob Dylan in May 1961 and recalled his reinvention with wonderment, "The change in Bob was, to say the least, incredible." Around 1963, Nelson too gravitated to New York, a shaping and eye-opening experience, assisted by him landing the best folk-LPs-for-nothing position in the land as managing editor of *Sing Out!* He stayed the course until he quit in support of Dylan going electric. Nelson was a valuable champion for Dylan and he would be a valuable champion of many more musicians in his later rock years. He was found dead at his home in Manhattan on 4 July. The authorities later ascertained the cause of death as heart disease, not, as the rumour mill first churned out, starvation. Coy about his date of birth, his age was said to be 72 when he died.

Micheál Ó Dhomhnaill 1952-2006

The short-lived Bothy Band, whose heyday was the late 1970s, took their name from a Scots tradition of playing music for bothy dwellers, the manual labourers whose physically demanding work was reflected in a muscular and musically lyrical earthiness. The Bothy Band was part of that post-Dubliners movement, like Planxty immediately before them, that redefined Irish music – and, it must be said, fed back to revitalise Scottish music.

Micheál Ó Dhomhnaill, their guitarist, singer, composer and folklorist, was born in Co. Meath, Eire in 1952 and died in Dublin on 8 July. He was the intellectual and artistic glue that bound together so much in the Bothy Band's short-lived life. Audiences enthused to Mulligan albums such as *1975* (1975), *Old Hag You Have Killed Me* (1976) and *Out of the Wind, Into the Sun* (1977) and Ó

Domhnaill was often the man who ferreted out the sort of Irish-language material and raised it into high-flyers of Irish culture. As Sarah Lifton so accurately described it in her *The Listener's Guide to Folk Music* (1983): "their instrumentation was a curious mix of the modern and the traditional and they clearly owed a debt to rock and as well as traditional music." That ambiguity was part of their charm. It certainly laid down ground rules of all sorts for Ó Domhnaill's later, often ambient, work with *Nightnoise* and *Relativity* (1986) and *Gathering Pace* (1987). He spent time in the United States, returning in 1997, to continue to enrich – and that is no obituarist's twaddle – his native country's tradition. Back in Eire he collaborated on all sorts of musical mischief, appeared on RTE (Eire's equivalent of CBC) and, in finest tinker fashion, refashioned the old music into new.

Peter Kennedy 1922-2006

"Without Peter Kennedy, you wouldn't have modern British folklore." Alan Lomax once said.

Peter Douglas Kennedy, folk-music field recordist, broadcaster, film-maker and musician died at Leckhampton, Gloucestershire, England, June 10. He was 84, writes Roddy Campbell. Kennedy was a driving force behind Britain's postwar folk revival, collaborating with the influential American archivist Lomax to revive the traditions of the Britain's musical past but also lead landmark recording sessions for next-generation torchbearers like Shirley Collins and Ewan MacColl.

Born in London on December 18, 1922, Peter's father, Douglas, served for decades as the director of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, authoring England's *Dances: Folk Dancing Today and Yesterday* (1950). His sister Maud accompanied folklorist Cecil Sharp during his song-collecting journey into the Appalachians. Peter Kennedy joined the BBC when Alan Lomax arrived in Britain in 1950 and the two hosted the programs *As I Walked Out* and *The Song Hunter*, among others, for which Peter made extensive field recordings throughout Britain, Ireland, the Basque country, and Yugoslavia.

He brought to wide audiences such important artists as Harry Cox and the Copper family, documented and helped revive local customs, organized folk festivals, and was involved in many seminal moments in the folk revival; including, as performer and producer, the formation and popularization of the first skiffle groups. He was a skillful and engaging vocalist and performer on the squeeze-box. Kennedy also produced numerous award-winning films, including the celebrated *Oss, Oss Wee Oss*. In 1957 he founded the non-profit record label and public archive Folktrax.

His book, *Folk Songs of Britain and Ireland*

(Cassell, 1975), compiled from field recordings sung in English, Lowland Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, and Manx Gaelic. Welsh, Cornish, Channel Island French, Romany, and Tinker cant, was groundbreaking in its revelation of the astonishing linguistic and cultural diversity of the inhabitants of the British Isles, even as it stressed the commonalities in the repertoires of the area.

Peter Kennedy was the recipient of numerous honours and awards including, most recently, a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Canadian Celtic College (2003) and the Gold Badge of the English Folk Dance and Song Society. In recent years Kennedy edited the *World Library and Portraits* CD series of the Alan Lomax Collection on Rounder Records.

S.D. Batish 1914-2006

The Punjabi multi-instrumentalist, singer, composer, 'music director' and restaurateur, Shiv Dayal Batish, born in Patiala, East Punjab, India on 14 December 1914, died in Santa Cruz, California on 29 July 2006. He made his mark in three continents. Ken Hunt remembers. From the 1960s onwards he contributed immensely to the spread of awareness, integration and knowledge of the music of the Indian subcontinent. In 1964 he bade farewell to a successful career as an All India Radio musician, film composer and playback singer to settle in London. He applied his extensive experience in broadcasting and composition to the nascent South Asian radio and television scene. His *Nai Zindagi Naya Jivan* (*New Birth, New Life*), the theme song to the BBC's *Apna Hi Ghar Samajhiye* (*Make Yourself At Home*) remains an early memory of South Asian immigrants. In 1965 he was part of a small team of Indian session musicians in exile who contributed the Indian incidental music to the Beatles' second film *Help!* (though this did not appear on the Beatles' album of the same name). In 1969 Topic Records released the Batish Family's *North Indian Folk and Classical Music* (1969), produced by the English folksinger and folklorist Bert Lloyd. The next year an opportunity arose to teach at Merrill College in Santa Cruz. The family moved there where they later established the Batish Institute of Music and Fine Arts (and a family-run restaurant).

Charlie Derrington 1955-2006

World-renowned American mandolin maker, Charlie Derrington, died August 1 while riding his motorbike in Nashville, TN. He was 51. A popular and respected general manager with Gibson acoustic instruments, Derrington was lauded as the luthier who rebuilt Bill Monroe's 1920s Gibson F-5 mandolin after it was smashed into splinters with a fire poker by a vandal. Monroe, apparently, wept when he got his instrument back.



Romi Mayes

By David McPherson

If Romi Mayes's songs don't make you cry, you likely aren't listening.

The Winnipeg native sings songs that sift through the shit and make you weep with their sad beauty. "I can't seem to escape heartbreak," says Mayes. "A good song makes me cry. Grown men have told me that some of my songs have made them ball their eyes out. I do write some goofy songs, but life is a hard road for a lot of people, including myself, and I guess I'm drawn to that."

It's the Civic Holiday Monday and I catch up with Mayes, wearing faded blue jeans and a jean shirt, sitting on the curb outside the Cameron House in Toronto, getting ready for that evening's show. Later, back inside, she hooks up with her dobro player Dan Walsh (formerly of the Fred Eaglesmith Band) to hash out the night's set list at the front bar. As the duo later hit the stage, along with guitarist Chris Carmichael, they plow through the bulk of the sweet sounds from Mayes new disc: *Sweet Somethin' Steady*, including *Eight More Days*, and *Long Way Home*.

The new disc veers away from the bluegrass sounds Mayes explored on her previous records and adds some good ole country-soul. *Sweet Somethin' Steady* took only a fortnight in the studio, where the sorrowful songwriter had the opportunity to work with her "dream producer," the Austin, Tx. based Gurf Morlix. Walsh knew Morlix and when he hooked up with Mayes last year, he sent some of her songs to the Texas troubadour. Morlix liked what he heard and as they say, the rest is history.

"I talked to him on the phone for an hour and everything I felt about albums and music he shared," says Mayes. "He brought the best out of all of us. He has golden ears and knows exactly

when things are right. It was really an organic process. It was a project of love and it really felt like a family. I hope to work with him again as we developed what I feel is a lifelong partnership."

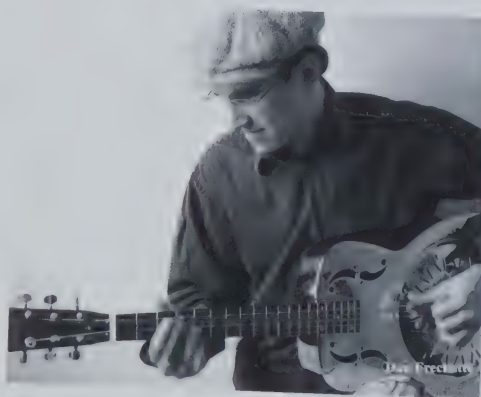
Dan Frechette

By David McPherson

Dan Frechette doesn't have many friends, but he does have more than 1,300 composition companions. And, for the Manitoba songwriter and folk singer, that's what really matters.

"I spent my childhood sitting in front of a record player every day from the time I was four-years-old until I was twelve," he says. "I didn't have any friends when I was a kid and I don't have that many friends to this day. It's just because music has sustained me so much."

Sustaining him these days is his debut disc *Lucky Day*, released in 2005. It took eight years for the



CD to come to fruition. It's not like Frechette didn't have enough material, he just needed the right time. With 14 tracks on this record, Frechette will have to get creative to ensure all his compositions eventually reach the masses.

"I am going to have to put out an iPod for my next album!" he jokes.

One way to get more of his songs out there is to have them covered. That has slowly started happening, and he feels honored by this, with the likes of fellow Manitobans the Duhks covering his *Mists of Down Below* on their last CD (*The Duhks*). "I remember I cried when I first heard them sing it," he says.

Frechette possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of the folk genre and the song slingers that came before him.

"The first thing I was listening to when I was 15 was *Dustbowl Ballads* by Woody Guthrie," he says. "That was partly because Dylan mentions Guthrie so much as

an influence that I wanted to listen to what Dylan listened to."

"It's also been a wonderful college education to have a record collection of 700-800 records," he adds. "Plus I know Mitch Podolak, who has another 7,000 records. He got all those records over his tenure at the Winnipeg Folk Festival as the artistic director and people were sending him records and he kept the best. You just grab any old record out of his collection and throw it on and you are just swimming in wonderful music."

Christine Hanson

By Roddy Campbell

The aptly-titled Celtic Connections international festival of traditional music runs every January in Glasgow. Modestly touted as the biggest festival of its kind in the world, it attracted Christine Hanson like a moth to a flame. With her cello in tow, Edmonton-born Hanson flew to Scotland in 2001 and made an immediate impression in the informal pub sessions surrounding the festival.

"I discovered that the cello had a place historically in Scottish traditional music. You would find a dance band with two fiddles and a cello, with basically the cello laying down a groove and bass lines – kind of driving the band," says Hanson, at home in Edmonton in July for a brief visit before teaching cello at the Coast String Fiddlers camp in BC. "For some reason, the cellists over there were not getting into it."

Fiddler Bruce MacGregor of Blazin' Fiddles spotted her playing in the bar in the Central Hotel and recruited her for his solo disc *101 Reasons To Do Nothing*. Eventually, she wound up recording with the likes of Martin Carthy, Eddi Reader and Karen Mathieson of Capercaillie and moving to Scotland.

More important still, Hanson became the first non-Scot to win a coveted New Voices commis-



sion from Celtic Connections. Her prize included a significant sum of money to allow her time to write an original piece of music. And so she set about composing an extended instrumental score around Robert Service's celebrated poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. It premiered in 2005 at the festival. "Christine Hanson's New Voices piece...succeeded brilliantly," wrote Rob Adams in the *Glasgow Herald*.

And it certainly does. While the foundation of the composition owes much of its structure to the folk tradition it cleverly and playfully intertwines with jazz and classical threads to evoke an ambience of mid-winter Yukon. Hanson has now recorded it on a disc titled, oddly enough, *The Cremation Of Sam McGee*, which features the likes of Shooglenifty drummer James MacIntosh, several members of Blazin' Fiddles and the compelling narrator, songwriter Michael Marra.

"When I was thinking of a narrator, there was only one guy and [Michael] was right up for this. To his credit, he had no idea what the music was going to sound like. He just agreed to do it. He pulls the best out of you when you work with him, which I like."

While working with Marra on a Robert Burns television special, she met former Fairground Attraction singer Eddi Reader. Reader was planning her own tribute to Burns (*See P.E. No. 24*) and invited Hanson to record and tour the UK with her.

Reader's band included one of Hanson's favourite musicians, the former Silly Wizard accordion player, Phil Cunningham.

"I'm thinking, 'Aaaaah, I'm sitting next to Phil Cunningham!' I really admired him."

As for the Martin Carthy encounter, he asked her to play on his latest disc *Waiting For Angles*, produced by his daughter Eliza in her house just outside of Edinburgh.

"I was honoured to do that. I find that stuff exciting but it's weird. How did that happen?"

Hanson, a former member of David Wilkie's Cowboy Celtic now hopes to tour "Sam" with at least an eight-piece band in Canada

Phyllis Sinclair

Amidst the merciless winter squalls that blast through the Hecate Strait, herring fishermen from the port of Prince Rupert strive to earn a living. There, on Mariner's Wall, numerous plaques remember those lost at sea.

This harsh BC background inspired Phyllis Sinclair's profoundly moving *North Coast Fisher Wife's Prayer*—one of several standout tracks on her positively impressive debut disc, *Fence Posts And Stones*. Sinclair, a former journalist with CBC radio, once managed Prince Rupert's Ocean Fisheries' gillnet fleet. She wrote *Fisher Wife's Prayer* as much for herself (her son worked as a



Phyllis Sinclair

deckhand), as for the numerous families she knew on the coast.

"Every year there were fatalities," says Sinclair. "I thought about how I felt and how the wives must feel when their husbands go out to work in the fishing grounds, particularly in February when the winds are rough. That song was a prayer for the families, really, of those who worked the fishing grounds."

Born Cree and raised in Churchill, MB, the Sinclair family moved to Winnipeg in 1967. There the then 13-year-old discovered folk music on the radio through the songs of Bob Dylan, Joan Baez and Donovan.

"There was something about folk music that went deep down inside and I gravitated to it."

Members of the city's aboriginal community taught her to play guitar. Music, however, remained more or less a hobby until 2003. Two concurrent events changed that: an invite to sing at the Springboard Hoedown near Athabasca, AB, and a David Francey concert in that town.

"I went. His writing, I thought, 'Wow, that is such simple, from the heart, conversational, here's what happened, everyday-life kind of writing.' I hadn't heard that for a long time. I thought for the Hoedown I would write a song. I wrote *Fence Posts and Stones*. And from that point I kept writing."

And she tells numerous elegant tales about a cousin's harsh life on the streets (*Hard Time Hannah*) and the dignity of struggling prairie farmers (*The Old Nine and Fence Posts And Stones*). She includes a lullaby partially sung in Cree (*Sleep Baby Blue Eyes*).

"I want to share my songs. Music is healing. Music is power. And the more good music we have the better of the world will be."

Charlie Sohmer

By Patrick Langston

Just because Charlie Sohmer's an accountant doesn't mean that the characters in his songs lead tidy, balanced lives.

Just look at *The Queen of Kentucky*, the shoot 'em-up tale of messy, unpredictable life in the old west from Sohmer's most recent, countryish album *Dying to Have a Good Time*.

In the song, a lady of easy virtue, a barroom card game and guns intersect. You know the rest.

"The characters I'm describing are really kind of regular people," says Sohmer by phone from his home in Ottawa. "Very few of them have a resolved situation."

Surprisingly, this is closer to accounting than you might think.

"Sometimes in an accounting puzzle, you go back and forth. It's kind of a forensic thing, you're trying to figure out what happened and piece it together. I develop a character and I want to know what his or her dilemma is and what she might be thinking."

Sohmer's been pondering and singing about such things for 35-odd years now, ever since he played in a "bottom rung" country band called, wait for it, Contraband.

He's released five independent albums since 1990, including the estimable *The Kiss Before the Calm* six years ago and his current effort. A couple of Sohmer tunes have even made it into theatre and film productions, including a Hollywood movie that promptly tanked.

On *Dying to Have a Good Time*, Sohmer is supported by a top-drawer collection of country musicians culled from the Brothers Cosmoline, the Bebob Cowboys and elsewhere.

Over his three-plus decades of music-making, Sohmer has also turned his hands to farming and operating healthfood stores. The accounting gig is a clear winner, though, giving him time between breakneck tax seasons to write, perform and, over the past several years, learn the banjo. Half of Sohmer's clients are themselves musicians.

"I have a different perspective on how the business works than a lot of my clients. A lot deserve success and don't get it. It tempers my own dream, my own feeling about what I can achieve. What 'I'm looking for now is not recording success but live success.'"



Charlie Sohmer



The Be Good Tanyas: From left to right Jolie Holland, Trish Klein and Frazey Ford

Out of the Wilderness

*The Be Good Tanyas return with **Hello Love**—a stellar, self-produced album that champions past and present unsung friends and heroes. “We never did . . . have a real comprehensive idea of what we were doing,” Sam Parton tells Roddy Campbell*

Sam Parton is the spiritual descendent of Dean Moriarty or Sal Paradise, I swear. Like the two central characters in Jack Kerouac’s trailblazing novel *On The Road*, she continually wanders America’s blue highways liberated from the perils of materialism and ambition in search of some universal truth. Or, at least a good song or a tune.

The unequivocal evidence filters through *Hello Love*—the gloriously assured new release from The Be Good Tanyas. It’s a recording sure to calm and comfort jangled nerves spooked by the darkness of its predecessor, *Chinatown*. Composed largely of shrewd, obscure covers, *Hello Love* includes several wonderful contributions from unheralded, underground friends quietly redefining roots music throughout North America. They include Sean Hayes (*A Thousand Tiny Pieces*), J. T. Lindsey and The Clouds (*Scattered Leaves*) and Old Crow Medicine Show (*Little Blues* and *Crow Waltz*).

Hello Love also marks a significant return to ac-

tion for the Tanyas after an extended period of relative inactivity due to vocalist Frazey Ford having a baby. Still, Trish Klein did form Po’ Girl with Allison Russell. And Parton toured with old friend Jolie Holland, played with Roger Dean Young, produced two records, made a documentary and, yes, travelled a lot.

“I think [the break] was really good but it made it a little hard when it came to doing the new album. We weren’t very focused,” says Parton. “For better or for worse we produced it ourselves. A producer, I think, would have made things a lot easier and a lot faster. It’s really hard when you have three people producing. Lots of fights. Bitter arguments (laughs). Not to say we wouldn’t have done that had we a producer.

“We didn’t go into it with very much organization. We never did write a list of songs or have a real comprehensive idea of what we were doing. It was so much trial and error, and so much spending time recording songs that weren’t quite ready to be recorded, or didn’t necessarily want to be recorded. I think it was hard for Frazey with her kid, trying to navigate that whole new side of reality. We just casually went at it here and there and, amazingly enough, cobbled together a record.”

You really have to admire the frankness.

Cobbled together or not, Parton’s oh-so-tender but unnervingly candid *Song For R* is the undisputed highlight on *Hello Love*. Written for a close associate addicted to drugs, the eye-watering, austere presentation features a rare appearance by Parton on piano.

While the new disc also pays agreeable tributes to Neil Young (*For The Turnstiles*)—“Neil is a god”—and Prince’s (*When Doves Cry*)—“thrown on the album for the hell of it”—the heart of this latest release lies in the Tanyas’ uncanny ability to put their own indelible string-band stamp on dark, obscure gospel and acoustic blues songs. This time around they’ve come up with superb interpretations of Washington Phillips’s *What Are They Doing In Heaven Today*, Mississippi John Hurt’s *Nobody Cares For Me*, and Mississippi Fred McDowell’s (*When You Come*) *Out Of The Wilderness*.

“I’m attracted to that stuff because it’s so pure,” says Parton. “Those musicians weren’t necessarily trying to get record deals. I mean some of them were, for sure, but the musicians were playing for themselves and their community. And it was super organic, and very communal, and very personal.

and very honest, and very true. That is what I am drawn to in that tradition, which you certainly don't find in pop music. It's much more competitive. It's much more about personal fame or having a hit. Music for me, or Frazey, or Trish, has never been that. It certainly always was about personal expression and community."

Sam Parton grew up in Vancouver content in her conventional suburban environment until she discovered Woody Guthrie in her late teens. Guthrie's itinerant lifestyle and meaningful songs struck a chord. Subsequently, she developed a chronic sense of wanderlust and set out to discover America and its musical traditions.

"I just had to get down south. I knew the musicians I would be hanging out with and meeting down there would open me up to a world that was not going to be that easy to access [in Canada]. Prior to the Internet, you couldn't find Washington Phillips's tapes or records in a record store in Vancouver. So down south I went and immediately started learning songs straight from other musicians."

She wound up amidst a wandering assortment of fellow travellers that included songwriters Dan Bern and Jason Eckland, and Critter Fuqua, Ketch Secor and Kevin Hayes, who later became the nucleus of Old Crow Medicine Show.

While poverty drove her back to Canada to plant trees in Nelson, BC, on her very first day at work she met Frazey Ford. Trish Klein they found shortly after at an open mic in town. And in the summer of 1999, The Be Good Tanyas made their debut at Lilith Fair in Vancouver, albeit outside the gates busking. By the end of the following year, they had made their brilliant, acoustic debut. *Blue Horse*, for a pittance.

"Somewhat akin to an amalgamation of the Carter Family, Gus Cannon & The Jug Stompers, and The Cowboy Junkies, The Be Good Tanyas are clearly the most thrilling roots act to emerge from Canada in almost a decade," trumpeted Penguin Eggs. It also made fans out of the likes of Sarah McLachlan and Emmylou Harris.

"The Be Good Tanyas, I love them," says Harris. "They're terrific and kind of play everything. There's no, 'Don't you dare pick up a banjo, because people are just going to assume certain things about you,' you know."

"Emmylou gave me a guitar strap, a very nice guitar strap," says Parton. "She's so nice. She wants to record with us someday down the road when we are not so busy."

The Tanyas sold *Blue Horse* by the armful from the back of a van until Nettwerk Records – home of The Barenaked Ladies and Avril Lavigne – picked it up for international distribution. It has gone on to sell upwards of 200,000 copies.

"It was a real shock for all of us. I'm very proud of that album and very proud that it came out of

nowhere. That's the kind of music we all listened to growing up – really dense harmonies and beautiful, organic instrumentation. So I was really happy to join forces with the other girls, who all came from that same background, and put that stuff out there.

"We didn't have any commercial aspirations. We just wanted to do it, to hear that sound. Maybe we were tapping into the collective unconsciousness, or whatever it was, but it seemed that the rest of the world was really ready for that sound again. I feel incredibly lucky, and blessed, and constantly amazed that that album had the impact it had."



Spanish Steps

Dancer and singer Eliseo Parra has spent two decades salvaging and restoring Spain's disappearing traditional folk songs. Lark Clark meets the man who makes tomorrow's Spanish music from its past.

Sevilla smells of jasmine in April; its light touch mixed with deeper swirls of orange blossoms – the sensual, the seasonal, things that return year after year.

Sevilla is the home of Eliseo Parra, recognized as an authority on Spain's vanishing traditional music and its deep and disparate roots. Once timeless, these songs are now gathered, caressed, and sent out into the world by Parra and his band.

"Jazz, salsa, rock, all have their advocates, but traditional music is for everybody: grandparents, grandchildren, everybody," says Parra.

"In 1983 I was a drummer, playing rock, a bit of jazz, some salsa. I realized I will never be a Cuban drummer. Then I heard traditional music. I fell in love with it, and I was inspired to make it my music."

In small villages in Spain, grandfather and

grandson still play music together. Holding folk recordist Alan Lomax as one of his heroes, Parra has spent years travelling to the remaining pockets of traditional music, "working with people, playing music and dancing, learning songs. It is not only what the woman sings, but everything she speaks about her life that teaches us."

Eliseo Parra's recording history encompasses twelve albums, including three of Sefardic songs – the music of the Spanish Jews – using simply oud, percussion, and voice.

"I work with Susana Weich, a musicologist from Tel Aviv. She is recording every Sefardic song in every remote area in Spain. I didn't know the repertory is so big. And they're singing in Spanish! It's incredible!"

"As well, we have a heritage from the Arabs in Spanish folk music. Eight centuries of the Moors is a lot of time to bring the influence of Arabic melodies and rhythms. And before them were the Iberos, the Romans, the Gauls, the Celts. Spain is so small but so rich because we have had so many invaders!"

De Ayer Manana, Parra's latest album, is a slang expression from La Mancha describing someone or something very, very old. And that, says Parra, seemed to suit his music. Another way to think of this expression is literal. *De ayer manana* – from yesterday: tomorrow. Tomorrow's music, coming from yesterday.

Travelling in Andalucía, Galicia, Catalonia, and the Basque country, absorbing the rhythms of these regions, the subtleties of the singing styles, Parra's music shimmers with emotional life. The ancient ways of life are disappearing before our eyes, but before the memory of it is gone, before the last person who lived the music passes away, Eliseo Parra is packing a musical ark, to take the music into the future. *De ayer – manana*.





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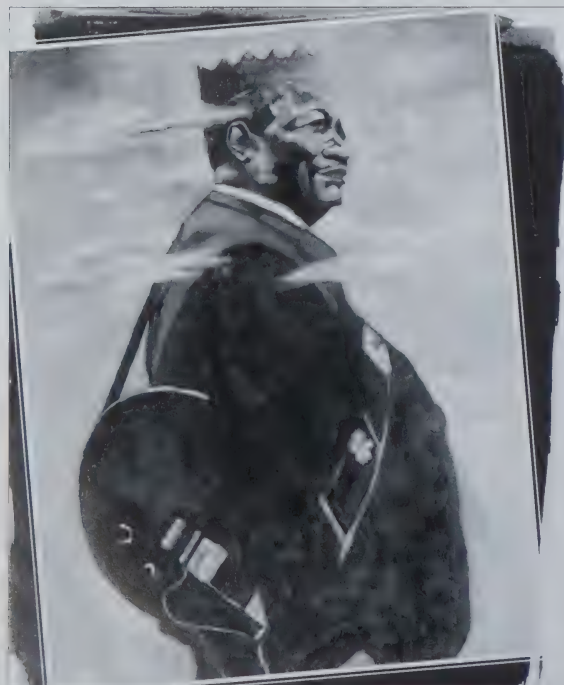
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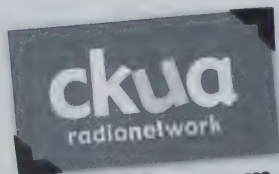
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When he began his musical odyssey in 1983, "folk music" was something despised, or more likely, ignored as irrelevant and irritating. Old women with panderos. Who cares? Now as the music becomes endangered, Spaniards are beginning to recognize the value of their musical heritage. One movement exists to try to reconstruct what the music may have sounded like. Parra's approach is different.

Beginning with the emotional context of the songs, his group of musical compañeros create startling effects. The band brings together unanticipated instrumentation (harmonium, various flutes, berimbau, piano, cittern) with unexpected polyrhythms, edgy harmonies, and sheer, swooping musicality.

The effect is almost theatrical, especially when Parra begins to dance. He is light on his feet; he hops and spins, physically manifesting the punctuated rhythms, until we can almost see the lines of men and women turning together in the open spaces of the village. Each member of the band applies original touches, and they play together with gusto. They appear to be extremely loyal to Parra, almost protective of him. They stay near him, addressing him with respect and affection, enlarging upon his answers to my questions, picking up where his modesty prevents him from self-promotion.

"My band has been with me almost six years. They come from rock and from jazz. They enrich what I give them. Friends are the big treasure in this life, even more than lovers. I have many friends and many people love me. That's why the music is so happy. The spirit of traditional music is to enjoy life."

Parra's next goal is to bring the traditional music of Spain to the rest of the world. "Spanish people

are very expressive. People in Canada are not accustomed to this music. But since the WOMEX festival last October [in Gateshead, England] we have been touring, and I want to go on."

And what's next in his personal life?

"Life brings me things. Life tells me, 'You are doing right.' When I feel this I do it. I'll see what life brings. I am a happy man. I have love, I have friends. I have just bought a nice house in the mountains beside a small village. The people there are friendly; the folklore is still alive. The people there go in the streets for three days during Carnival. I live in Madrid now but I am going to this village more often. La naturaleza is fantastic. Nature teaches a lot. We have the same importance as an ant or a tree. We are not superior."

"What do I want? To know myself. I try to be better everyday, to be good with my compañeros,"

Timeless goals, from a man who has found happiness with tradition as his medium.



A Murder of Crows

Like Pete Seeger, Old Crow Medicine Show consider themselves links in a chain. They made their bones busking across Canada and are big in Parry Sound, apparently. David McPherson has a natter about their fine new album, Big Iron World

Ketch Secor's name calls to mind a front-porch picker in a sleepy Appalachian town. That's not surprising since he's gone from regularly buskin' in Kingston, ON, eight years ago to riding into Nashville, TN in a big ole Cadillac filled with corn liquor to play the Grand Ole Opry for the first time in 2001. The ride for Secor's band Old Crow

Medicine Show (OCMS) has been filled with many passionate performances, and timeless tunes are at the root of its musical journey.

"That's part of the agenda for our band," he explains. "We came into this music with a real excitement, a real furor and passion for music that comes before the radio, back in the '20s ... these 'heyday' recordings that came from the buskers, and the front-porch pickers, and the people that travelled around being itinerant wanderers, and medicineshow performers. That musical vocabulary is very important to us and we continue to dredge up old tunes."

"One thing about Old Crow is that although we often bring back an old tune, it is our intention to mark the times that are passing these days in the ways they were marked 20 years ago because that way works," he adds. "Sometimes I think I'm living in a layer beneath this one and this music is actually still important. You read about some topical event in the news and you write a song about it or somebody picks you up hitchhiking and the story is so universal you have to make it into a tune."

Taking a break from writing storied tunes, a few weeks before his band's full-length sophomore record, *Big Iron World*, hits the streets, the fiddling frontman is keeping a "low profile" on an island off the coast of Maine.

The band's journey began eight years ago with its first cross-Canada tour, which town-by-town raised its profile; the Virginia native credits his northern neighbor for where OCMS are today.

"That trip was so wild and so free," Secor says. "It felt like forever. We went to places with music where it had been very quiet for some time. We were the first music box to play in a lot of places. We did a lot of street performing. These were fun-



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ny gigs. Take Parry Sound, for example. Bands don't go there. Why would they? It's not a great town. Nobody lives there except for some old, weird people.

"We would come to a town and we could see something that wasn't necessarily written on the billboards," he continues. "All these people needed something to do, something that was real and we were that thing. We would walk into a joint and there would be four people at the bar and we would ask the bartender if we could play and by the end of the night there would be 40. And then we would go home with the prettiest girl in the joint and go out to the woods or some cabin or some third-floor, mouldy, drugged-down apartment. Then on to the next town, Tobermory, Windsor, Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo... this band didn't get gigs because we had a press kit or a website, this band got gigs because we went to your front porch and knocked on your door."

On *Big Iron World* the band once again worked with producer David Rawlings (best known as the front-porch pickin' mate of Gillian Welch). Secor wrote more with Rawlings this time around as the two co-wrote several of the many highlights on the new disc, including *Don't Ride that Horse* and *I Hear Them All*.

"Dave and I started writing together a couple of years ago," Secor says. "This is the first time we have been able to put our songs somewhere though. We share a lot of the same musical ideas between Old Crow and Dave, so it's been a really good pairing. It's also made us stronger and it's been good for him too. He's learned how to play the banjo and we gleaned some of his songwriting skills."

Like many roots musicians, Secor gleaned his early songwriting skills from the '60s folk revival troubadours, starting with Dylan.

"You start off with Bob [Dylan] really. We are kind of in the shadow of the songwriting man. When trying to understand where Dylan learned his bag of tricks from, it's obvious that in addition to reading a lot of poetry, he listened to a lot of 'heyday' music like A.P. Carter, who did a bang up job of going out there and finding all of these wonderful old songs and then chopping them up, cutting them apart and putting verses together. In many cases, what we think of as an American folk song is something that was ordered up by A.P. Carter.

"That music took a whole American history to make. It took immigration, it took migration, it took changing patterns of work, and it took slavery, war and revolution to build those songs."

According to Secor and the rest of his OCMS mates, which includes Critter Fuqua, Kevin Hayes, Morgan Jahng, and Willie Watson, songs are written to move you.

"I think it's for the people to have music be

something important to them that belongs to them, and tells them about where they are, about what place is and what place means and about the value of space... of their bodies in space and time.

"Music is the grounding force. It cuts through you like lightning and it finds the root."

With *Big Iron World*, OCMS continue to write its own musical history, offering up a dozen hoots, blues hollers and timeless tunes that dig up the roots of 'roots music.' Secor ends the conversation by speaking of the musical mysteries that are out there, and how all music is linked in one way or another.

"There are all these mysteries happening where the music doesn't play by the rules, where you learn that the music is much larger and more reflective of the ever-changing human landscape. "North America has the most exciting musical, human story. I'm really excited to be a link in the chain, as Pete Seeger talked about. That's really what Old Crow does. We are another link in the chain that stretches back to the first trappers from the British Isles who trooped across and met the Chipewyan people and said, 'here's a fiddle tune, maybe you would like to dance to it.'"



Beyond the Blues

The daring Maritime blues trio Hot Toddy also experiment with jazz, bluegrass and flamenco. And they are taking giant strides towards national recognition, reckons Paul-Emile Comeau

The Fredericton-based Hot Toddy started out as a blues duo ten years or so ago. By the time the group released *Shoe Factory*, its second album, Tom Easley (electric bass) had been added to the original duo, which consisted of Thom Swift (vocals, guitar, dobro) and Joel LeBlanc (vocals, elec-

tric guitar, and harmonica). Hot Toddy's first two albums featured originals mixed with unique covers of songs by artists such as Sonny Terry, Mississippi John Hurt, Little Walter, and T-Bone Walker. *Any Day*, the group's third album, still featured renditions of songs by John Hurt, Junior Brown, and Duke Ellington but the group's three subsequent albums focused largely on self-penned material. The group's musical style was becoming increasingly difficult to pin down and any attempt at describing its sound included references to jazz, folk, and funk.

In recent years, Hot Toddy has made the transition from a local band with a loyal following to one that's gradually becoming a household name throughout the Maritime Provinces.

Thom Swift explains the genesis of the trio's origins: "Joel and I found each other working at the same music store in Fredericton. He was a great single-note guitarist and I also played guitar, bass, and drums, so I tried to incorporate that whole sound into my rhythm guitar playing. Then I began listening to [Rev.] Gary Davis and John Hurt and exploring fingerstyle guitar and slide. Tom Easley also had an interest in jazz, so our sound became very groove-oriented."

As the group became increasingly eclectic in its musical vision it also began to write more of its material.

"For us each step forward is kind of a baby step, which is in line with the philosophy of the group," explains Swift. This slow but methodical approach is beginning to pay off. In recent years the group has made forays into Ontario, Western Canada, and Europe.

"The fact that we're all over the place, musically speaking, is advantageous because it keeps the creative juices flowing and it allows us to be booked at different kinds of festivals...blues, jazz, folk."

The trio even received a very warm reception at



the Newport Folk Festival this past August. The members of the group have also spread out geographically in recent years, Easley and Swift having moved to the Halifax region for personal reasons. "The fact that we're a little dispersed hasn't caused us any problems. When we do get together for shows it just makes for a more intense experience. We also record every show so we can check back on how we did."

When they're apart the three of them also follow other interests. Both LeBlanc and Easley play jazz gigs with other musicians and Swift pursues his own songwriting career. This trio has also initiated some interesting partnerships within the last few years. In June 2003 the group recorded live off the floor in a house in St. Andrews, N.B. with special guests Bill Stevenson (piano) and Geoff Arsenault (percussion) — two of the country's very best musicians in their respective fields. The results of the sessions were released on two CDs called *The Salty Sessions - Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*, the latter winning an ECMA in 2005 for Best Blues Recording of the Year.

Two years later, Hot Toddy got together with Isaac & Blewett, a well-known New Brunswick duo, one that started out as an original blues trio ten years ago or so. Isaac & Blewett had four albums to their credit, two as part of the original trio, two as a duo, and were good friends with Hot Toddy. A collaboration seemed inevitable. The result was *Live at the Black Box*, an egalitarian project that features two compositions by each of the five musicians. Tim Isaac, a cellist/singer/songwriter, and Jim Blewett, a singer/rhythm guitarist, added a stronger folk, classical, and country blues flavour to Hot Toddy's musical palette.

The album leads off with Swift's *Hard Times*, a gripping folk-blues song that grabs one's attention immediately, in no small part because of Swift's strong resonant vocals. The rest of the album, which includes four instrumentals, is much more nuanced, making it the type of album that grows on a listener with repeated listening. The fact that all the musicians know and respect each other prods them to improvise on each member's compositions. The musicians sometimes opt for a low-key approach but the result is very cohesive.

Following the release of the album, the group toured as a quintet and, as Swift points out, "We've all been very close friends for years and the collaboration transformed our sound. Although the tour is over we still do shows together once in a while."

Although Hot Toddy performs at the Harvest Jazz and Blues Festival in Fredericton every year, the group is receiving more and more invitations from other festivals. A few years ago the trio did a workshop with Juan Martín at the Stan Rogers Folk Festival. This summer they teamed up with the Spanish flamenco guitarist again for several



Photo by Tony Montague

Eiran Finatawa

days in New Brunswick. Then, they more or less replicated the results at the Halifax Jazz Festival. There are plans to do more shows together, possibly a tour of India, and probably an album.

The trio also met harmonica master Mike Stevens. Again, there are further concert collaboration possibilities and maybe a joint recording project. Thom Swift is planning a solo album and Hot Toddy follow him into the studio in the spring.

The group's small-town beginnings may have been more modest than auspicious but the group's 'baby steps' are slowly turning into major strides. Presumably, that was the master plan from the beginning.



Global Gathering

The annual World of Music, Arts, and Dance (WOMAD) extravaganza takes place every July near Reading, England. Highlights at the 2006 event were frequent and ferocious. Dispatches from the trenches, Tony Montague

It's near the end of the WOMAD festival, and I should be completely saturated. But it's just the opposite. Three days and nights of listening to a virtually non-stop succession of top-calibre world music artists has only sharpened the appetite for more and different sounds. So while I'm not drawn by the 'transglobal' tag given to Mitsoura in the program, I'll give the Hungarians a whirl.

An hour later, and I'm picking up my jaw from the ground after a performance of rare and almost unrelenting intensity. The charismatic Mitsou —

who fronts the Budapest band — and five highly imaginative young musicians serve up a club cocktail of traditional Gypsy music, from central Europe to India, blended with hard-edged trance and a trace of techno. Stirred and shaken.

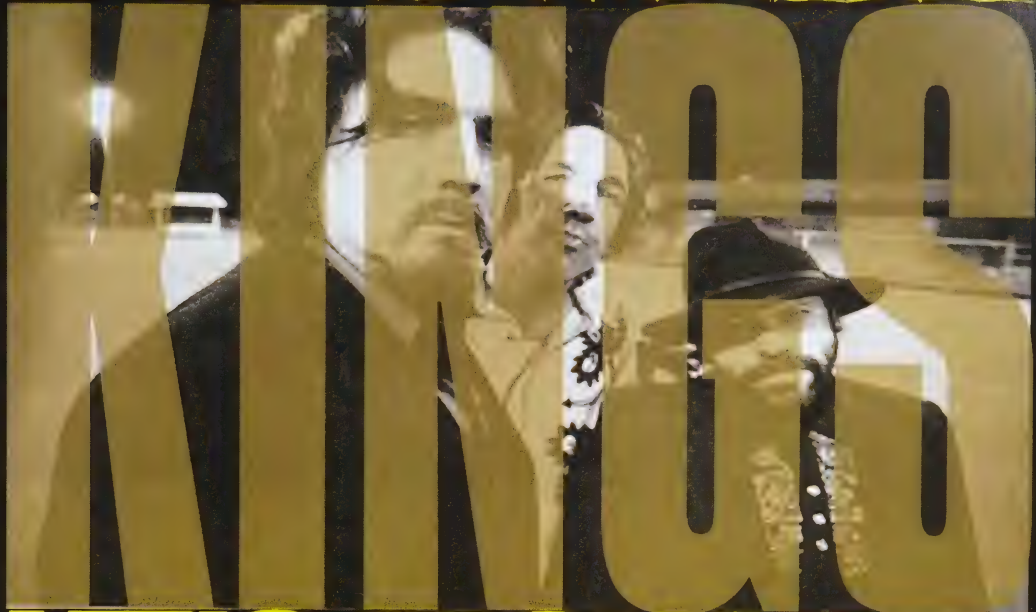
Singing with eyes closed and both hands clasping the mike, Mitsou has a voice like some Homeric siren on helium — girlishly high, elastic, penetrating, and strange. The music shifts gear and changes direction with deceptive ease. Cleverly-programmed beats, tablas and percussion provide a rhythmic mesh on which Hungarian folk instruments such as cimbalom, kaval [flute], gadulka, jew's harp, and clarinet weave patterns and build up the harmonic textures

The grooves are deep, often dark. And all the while there's a fantastic lightshow going on behind the musicians — with mandalas, cartoon images, and psychedelic colours pulsing. WOMAD is definitely a trip.

It draws some 34,000 fans to the Rivermead fairground beside the Thames near Reading, and sells out every year. There are 10 stages of varying sizes and types, mostly under canvas or in the open, and the acts generally perform once only, for an hour.

This year's edition, the biggest yet, included fine shows by many acknowledged stars of world music — among them Anoushka Shankar, Salif Keita, Toumani Diabaté, Susana Baca, Djelmaday Tounkara, Femi Kuti, Trilok Gurtu, and Angelique Kidjo. But what makes WOMAD special is the chance it gives to so many breaking or under-exposed artists to play for an eager, musically sophisticated audience.

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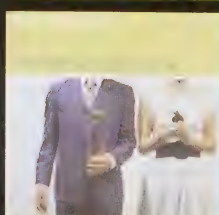
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Dimi Mint Abba has one of the great voices of northern Africa – and it's easy to understand why Ali Farka Toure called her his favourite female artist. The diminutive Mauritanian shares the late guitar-master's subtlety of phrasing and quiet passion, singing in an unforced manner with clarity, poise, and dignity. Abba, who remained seated throughout her set at the open air stage, only had two accompanists with her as four members of the band were denied UK visas – which made her performance even more impressive.

As the name implies, Salsa Celtica from Edinburgh brings together Afro-Caribbean and Celtic traditions to create a big, boisterous sound with trumpets, saxophones, fiddles, and bagpipes. Once or twice the combination of bum-shaking, clave-based Nuyorican rhythms and square-on-the-beat Highland dance tunes felt odd, but most of the time it worked amazingly well. And inviting Eliza Carthy to perform an old ballad, with Latin brass to back her, only adds to the band's reputation for innovative blending.

The homegrown folk scene was well-represented by Bellowhead – the English equivalent, more or less, of La Bottine Souriante (vintage La Mistrine). The young 11-piece band is led by accordionist John Spiers and fiddler and singer Jon Boden – two lads who know southern English songs and tunes inside out, and strike just the right balance between respect and playful irreverence in their attitude. Boden, who sported a black suit and shocking-pink tie, is a strong frontman with a touch of John Cleese in his dry whackiness.

Bellowhead features a cellist and a four-piece brass section, including a susaphone, which gives its bold arrangements plenty of thump and punch. Later, I caught Spiers and Boden as a duo at the up-close-and-personal BBC Radio Three stage (CBC please note), where their almost-intuitive rapport was even more evident.

Belgian band Think of One kick-started proceedings at Saturday's open air stage with its free-wheeling blend of world music, jazz, rock, pop, and punk with a circus flavour. At the band's core are six Antwerp-based musicians who like to take off to places like Morocco and Brazil for extended visits to absorb riffs and rhythms and work them into original songs with a unique transcultural stamp. They came to WOMAD with a drum-master and three female singers and percussionists from Recife, Brazil – among them, 66 year-old energy-bundle Dona Cila do Côco.

Think of One quickly established a carnival ambience onstage, and it spilled over into the crowd. The ultra-eclectic music was occasionally wild and noisy, usually tight and carefully arranged, and always lots of fun as its centre of gravity oscillated between northwest Europe and northeast Brazil.

At the end of Etran Finatawa's first UK gig the six



musicians from Niger looked stunned by the ovation. They deserved no less – the new twist they gave the electric desert-blues of West Africa was thrilling. E.T.'s members come from their country's two main nomadic groups: the Tuaregs from the Sahara, and the less familiar Wodaabes, clearly a sub-Saharan people. Their collective sound draws, in roughly equal measure, on both cultures.

Swathed in robes, and with only faces and hands uncovered, the three Tuaregs in the band carved out mesmeric grooves on electric guitars and clicking calabash, while the Wodaabes – wearing face-paint, feathers, and armless tunics – performed call-and-response songs, and added extra layers of percussion. The mix was at once timeless and urgently contemporary.

The compositions of Thierry 'Titi' Robin have such a natural shape and flow that it's easy to believe they're traditional pieces. The French multi-instrumentalist has dedicated his life to exploring the music of the Gypsy diaspora from Spain to North Africa, the Balkans to Rajasthan, and he creates fabulous new hybrids. Backed by a trio, Robin played a varied and well-paced choice of material, switching deftly between flamenco guitar, Arabic oud, and Greek bouzouki. His technical mastery meant that he had plenty of time and space to add the soulful nuances and embellishments that drew listeners in to his music.

Titi was one of the few artists to perform twice at Rivermead. As well as doing a concert set at the huge Siam Tent he took part in a special BBC Radio London show, which also featured African band Daby Balde, blind Portuguese fadista Dona Rosa, and K'Naan (Canada's sole representative

at Rivermead). It was sadly the last of the annual live-broadcasts from the festival to be hosted by the incomparable Charlie Gillett, who's stepping aside due to ill health. For his work in building bridges of respect and understanding between cultures through music, Gillett should be recognized in the U.K. as a national hero. His open ears and spirit of adventure are what WOMAD is all about.



Travellin' Light

Globetrotting Po' Girl partners Allison Russell and Awna Teixeira have added to their already frantic touring schedule by forming the utility roots duo, Salt. West Africa beckons, they tell Tony Montague

Home for Allison Russell and Awna Teixeira means Vancouver, and more particularly the Strathcona neighbourhood, by Chinatown. Well that's the theory. In reality the pair – who play together as Salt, and are also both members of the folk and roots band Po' Girl – spend almost all of their time on the road, running into old friends, making new ones, sparking each other's creativity, and eking out an existence as musical vagabonds.

"So far this year we've been in Vancouver maybe a month all together," says Awna, speaking from Ontario, where she and Allison are cutting Salt's debut disc of original songs. "We're globetrotting girls these days, as much as we can be."

It's been that way for the past year and a half, since multi-instrumentalist and singer Awna joined Po' Girl and – "to keep things cheap" – soon after-

wards moved into the big house where Allison was already a room-mate.

They started making music as a duo, and clicked so fast that a body of songs quickly emerged. So when Po' Girl was invited to play at the Blues to Bop festival in Lugano, in September of last year, Salt decided they'd stay on in Europe and do a tour, arranged by an Italian friend and booking agent. The duo did shows the length of Italy and even made a mad dash to perform in Dusseldorf, Germany.

Sometimes the music world is dizzily back-to-front. Before anyone in Canada knew of Salt's existence (outside East Van) the duo had a six-week European tour under their belts.

"It was an amazing experience," says nouveau-hobo Allison. "We sold all the copies of the EP we'd made and had features in publications around Italy. To people there we were such a novelty, playing those weird instruments and travelling around on our own."

Mind you, Salt didn't take all their instruments with them. That would have meant finding room on the train for the banjo, accordion, guitar, electric bass, and gut-bucket bass played by Awna, and the clarinet, guitar, whistles, and bodhran, wielded by Allison. Not to mention the cello Awna had before swapping it for a viola and then a banjo. Her harmonicas were less of a packing issue.

"It's great to have so many writing tools, which is primarily what I use them for," says Awna. "I agree that for each of us the instrument helps to create the song." Allison chips in. "We write differently on each one, and approach each song as its own little world."

"Both of us come from a background where we've been very comfortable with singing and instruments were secondary," says Awna, who was a founding member of the all-girl, new old-time band Barley Wik. "But that's shifting now."

Allison is best known as a fine vocalist who's completely at home in any genre or style — from unadorned blues and Celtic songs to silky jazz ballads. But she's keen to explore the new musical dimension that being a player offers her.

"Getting out of the singer's ghetto has been this amazing opening up. I used to feel very abashed to say to people 'I'm not really a musician, I'm a singer,' and then realizing that it's not rocket-science. You can pick up a few chords pretty easily. That was very liberating because I was writing so much, but I had to bring the melody to someone else. Lately we've been excited about the clarinet and the accordion together. And I've been loving playing the banjo, for its percussiveness."

Allison and Awna are in creative overdrive co-writing for Salt. The main challenge of the album for them is deciding which of the songs they're recording will have to be excluded from the final

cut. The brand-new *Burning By Our Hands* is guaranteed a passage, and is indicative of the wider concerns and outlook of Salt.

"We made these very good friends in a wonderful band, originally from Chad, called H'Sao who we ran into at a bunch of different festivals. We got talking to them about their experiences growing up in a country where lack of water is beyond a crisis situation. The song reflects on all of that. Much of our writing comes from trying to come to terms, not just with ourselves but our place in it."

The two-woman band is part of a network of young roots music artists across North America, and beyond, who meet at festivals, conferences, and showcases. "It's really important for the development of all of us to have that time, that community together, however brief," says Allison. "Then we're scattered to the winds."

Among Salt's inspirational friends Awna and Allison mention B.C. songwriter Rae Spoon (they first met five years ago when both were contributing to his *Your Trailer Door* album), Victoria's Carolyn Mark, JT and the Clouds from Chicago, Luther Wright and the Wrongs from Kingston, Chris Brown and Kate Fenner based in New York. As well as Anna Egge from Austin, Texas and Jason Mercer from Toronto who are coproducing Salt's debut album with the girls.

"Salt is just the two of us at core, but we perform with a lot of different people," says Awna.

"Depending on the city we're playing in, and who we know, all kinds of special guests can show up."

Allison and Awna will be seeing a lot more of the world in the coming year. Salt is touring down the West Coast this October. Po' Girl's latest album, already recorded, is due for release this winter, after which the band goes to Australia then the U.K. They'll also be doing the Blue Highways Festival in Utrecht (Holland) next spring, plus shows in Denmark, Spain, France, and possibly Italy.

The most alluring prospect for the globe-trotting duo is going to Africa for the 10-day Masao international festival of women's voices in Cameroon in May, with Po' Girl. "We're friends with Mighty Popo, and he knows people in Tanzania, Rwanda, and Mali," says Allison. "We want to spend all of May in Africa if we can. I'm very drawn to Mali in particular, where there's such a strong tradition of women's music."

With Salt's international network expanding fast, it's a good thing the duo continue to be so mobile, and so free-wheeling. "It's not like we have any expensive gear or special effects," says Allison. "We just play the instruments we have at hand. It's really basic in a sense. It's hard to put any label what we do. I call it roots music, because that leaves it wide open."

"And that's how we want to keep things," adds Awna.

And Another Thing

Tom Wilson does not mince his words. One of the country's great musical characters, his admirers include Mavis Staples, Roseanne Cash and... erm... President George Bush. Patrick Langston has a quiet word.

Burly, craggy-faced and noted for his wonderful, earthshaking baritone, roots rocker Tom Wilson, on stage with a full band, often seems like a loose cannon. His music erupts with an energy at once exhilarating and a tad scary. He doesn't approach the mike so much as challenge it. You're never sure if, having abruptly faced the band, he's about to whirl back around and launch a blitzkrieg at the world.

Surprising, then, to hear him chat sympathetically and at length with his interviewer about aging parents (Wilson's been there) during a phone conversation from a home he shares with his partner, comedienne Cathy Jones, in Halifax.

It's also a bit unexpected when he interrupts the conversation, apologizing afterward, to say gently to Jones, "I'd love a coffee, honey, that's great."

But then such contradictions just make Wilson a member of the human race. No wonder his current dandy solo release *Dog Years*, which ranges from full-bore rockers to country ballads, speaks so directly to fans: like life, you never know what you're going to get next.

Not that the 47-year-old Wilson, who released his solo debut *Planet Love* in 2001 and who you'll also know as one-third of the rocking little outfit Blackie and the Rodeo Kings, turns into some kind of milquetoast when he abandons the mike.

Slipping into the soothing voiceover familiar from his television commercial gigs, Wilson intones. "I'm the voice of Pontiac: 'Feel free. Introducing the Pontiac Solstice. It goes where you go.'"



Tom Wilson

Youth & Experience at the Crossroads



Linda Ronstadt & Ann Savoy **Adieu False Heart**

Linda Ronstadt and **Ann Savoy** first teamed up on the Grammy nominated "Evangéline Made" released by Vanguard in 2002. Now they are back with *Adieu False Heart*, a blending of the lush Louisiana Cajun sound of Savoy's rich alto and the pure soprano of Ronstadt, Tucson-born and bred, who has deep roots in America's regional music. They are backed by an outstanding band including Joel Savoy, Sam Broussard, Byron House, Dirk Powell, Sam Bush, Krista Wilkinson, Chas Justus, Stuart Duncan, Andrea Zonn and Kirstin Wilkinson. The first single is a heart-wrenchingly exquisite rendition of the Left Banke's 1966 hit "Walk Away Renee." **Available Now**

The Duhks **Migrations**

For four years now, **The Duhks**, the band of five skilled, high-energy, tattooed twenty-something's from Winnipeg, Manitoba, have been riveting audiences and winning staunch fans across North America and around the world. "Migrations," their 3rd release, reflects their growing experience, group maturity and sense of self. That growth is reflected in the upbeat, anthemic first single, "Out of the Rain." Produced in Nashville by bluegrass and folk veteran Tim O'Brien and co-produced, as was their last disc, by Grammy Award-winning engineer and producer Gary Paczosa, the eleven tracks on "Migrations" flowed into place with new-found ease.

Available September 12



Riley Baugus **Long Steel Rail**

In his formative years, highly regarded, oldtime musician **Riley Baugus** often played with and learned from elders of the tradition in North Carolina and Virginia - including legendary oldtime fiddler Tommy Jarrell. Earnest study - and total immersion in the wealth of knowledge available to him by virtue of being an insider from the region - gave Baugus access to experience that positioned the North Carolina native as standard bearer and direct link between the art's pre-commercial beginnings and today. On "Long Steel Rail" Baugus continues to embrace his role in this lineage: singing, fiddling and playing banjo with absolute love and respect for the humanity and tradition that brings music into his life. **Available Now**

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Asked whether the commercial has prompted sneers of "sellout" from fellow musicians, the man who sings the acerbic *I'm In Love with the System* ("that keeps me down") on Dog Years snarls, "Fuck them."

He repeats the sentiment when recalling the digs leveled by some of his peers after he signed his now-defunct indie rock band Junkhouse to Sony in the 1990s.

Not the kind of bridge-building that prompts the music community to reach out to you. But then Wilson's no stranger to that.

"I always felt like an outsider," he says of his high school days. And although Wilson points out the loneliness of outsiders, he's quick to add, "if you don't go completely over the rails and rebel against everything, you might discover things about yourself that you otherwise wouldn't have discovered."

He says this having just praised the peaches and yogurt that Jones made him for breakfast. Which doesn't sound like the chow Wilson, a one-time hard drinker, would have been raised on in rough-and-tumble Hamilton, Ontario.

"Usually when the Indian side of the family came down to visit us from Quebec they brought down guitars and ukies but usually it ended up in drinking and fighting."

Wilson, despite his family's propensity for turning musical soirees into free-for-alls, was inspired to pursue a career in music when he saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan in the 1960s. Typically, he bruised his knees.

"I started hanging around folk clubs and punk bars when everyone else was into disco dancing," he says. "From the time I was young, I wanted to be a folk singer, but it was a closed society."

Bad enough to be snubbed by most folkies, but Wilson couldn't even make it as a bonafide

punker. He liked punk, he says, because "anything could get on stage. It didn't require a pedigree. I didn't fit into that either because I never stuck a safety pin through my eyeball."

He did, however, form the Florida Razors in the 1980s, playing a mix of rockabilly, punk and rock 'n' roll and selling a boatload of indie CDs on the Montreal-Detroit circuit for seven years.

Despite the Razors' below-the-radar success, Wilson was disheartened by the music industry, especially the mainstream variety. He abandoned the business for a while in the 1980s, eventually being lured back by Daniel Lanois, who invited him to spend some time soaking up music in New Orleans. Wilson then went on to establish Junkhouse, leading the group through three albums.

Nothing if not restless, Wilson has more recently also teamed up with ex-Junkhouse bass player Russell Wilson and Daniel Lanois's harmonica-playing techno-wiz brother Bob. Their album, *The Shack Recordings, Vol. 1.*, was released last year to critical acclaim, and the three occasionally perform together.

Wilson's best-known collaboration is, of course, the Juno-winning Blackie and the Rodeo Kings (their renown got a questionable boost when it was revealed that George W. Bush had Blackie's *Swinging From The Chains Of Love* on his iPod).

Formed in the mid-1990s with Colin Linden and Stephen Fearing, the trio has released four albums including this fall's *Let's Frolic*. If they play in your city, don't miss them: they're a treat every time.

"Individually, we go to the woodshed a lot. You don't live off past glories and you don't live off the last record you made. I think there's a little too much complacency maybe in music. It used to be, home taping kills music and downloading kills off music. Well no, it's bad music that kills music."

A terrific songwriter whose tunes have been covered by the likes of Murray McLachlan, Billy Ray Cyrus and Mavis Staples, Wilson is also a born collaborator. On *Dog Years*, you'll find Josh Finlayson (Skydiggers) and others, even Cathy Jones, as co-writers. And while she didn't write it, Rosanne Cash does sing a poignant duet, *Talk of the Town*, on the album, which the well-connected Colin Linden produced in Nashville and New York.

"As much of a workaholic as I am, I also get lazy. I also have a short attention span, so they kind of keep me on track."

One spot Wilson doesn't collaborate in is his painting studio. Working on very large canvases, Wilson paints variations of a woman's face, scratches lyrics of a song across it with a knife blade and then digs an extemporaneous story based on the lyrics into the canvass.

"Painting for me has turned into another outlet for my words," says the self-taught Wilson. "It's really therapeutic. It saves me like a hundred dol-

lars an hour."

His artwork on the Junkhouse *Birthday Boy* album, by the way, was good enough to win Wilson a Juno Award.

Cathy Jones, with whom he shares a second house in Hamilton, is a great booster of his art, says Wilson. She's also apparently helped coax out the inner, kinder Tom. "She's opened me up to the possibility of being a better person. She's kind of taught me ego is an asshole."



Tragically Hip

David Sheffield looks back at the life and times of the late Canadian singer-songwriter Gene MacLellan – a flawed genius who took his own life a decade ago.

Gene MacLellan's wrote major hits such as *Snowbird*, *The Call*, *Bidin' My Time* and *Put Your Hand in the Hand* – the latter covered by the likes of Elvis Presley, Joan Baez, and Bing Crosby. And yet a decade after his tragic death, MacLellan remains an enigmatic character on the fringes of Canadian culture.

"He was a really talented man who only cared about songs. He didn't care about the music business, and that makes the industry people frustrated," says Ron Hynes.

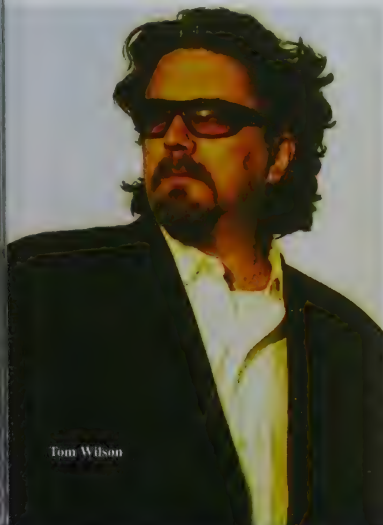
As a child, MacLellan suffered from polio and a heart condition, and later, several car accidents left him scarred physically and wounded emotionally. That personal pain gave his songs a credibility that couldn't be contrived. Radio broadcaster and friend, Eric MacEwen says, "His heart understood loneliness and lost love, and he had a penchant for melody that was phenomenal."

Ironically, most people who met MacLellan would describe him as friendly and upbeat. His manager, Jack McAndrew, put it this way, "Self-effacement is a winsome quality, and endears you to people, and Gene had that. I don't think he took himself seriously, but he took what he did seriously."

Born in the northern Quebec mining town of Val d'Or in February, 1938, MacLellan spent his formative years in Toronto where his family lived a typically suburban life. He took up the guitar when he was 10, quickly becoming adept. His sister remembers "piling into our parents' bed with Gene on Saturday mornings and singing songs together."

He dropped out of high school to play with various bands in Toronto's early rock and roll scene. The Consuls, led by Bruce Morshead, featured MacLellan on guitar and vocals. Robbie Robertson also joined the band for a short stint. The Consuls sometimes opened for Ronnie Hawkins, who MacLellan would later say influenced him more than anyone else.

While most bands in Canada were covering the



Tom Wilson

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Gene MacLellan

new sounds coming out of the U.S., MacLellan and other band members were writing original tunes and adding them to their repertoire. "I wrote a couple of things when I was with the Consuls," Gene recounted in a later interview. "Bruce was writing then too. We were about the only two guys around then doing any writing."

MacLellan left Toronto and roamed about the east coast, working as a busboy in Rhode Island, singing with a travelling evangelist, and eventually harvesting farm produce in PEI. He would later write about a prodigal wanderer on *Thorn in My Shoe*.

By 1964, MacLellan had settled down, living with his aunt at Pownal, PEI near Charlottetown, and working as an attendant at the Riverside Psychiatric Hospital. That's where he started writing songs seriously and sent out a demo tape to the Don Messer TV Show in Halifax, NS.

A regular gig with Messer, starting in 1966, led to a brief stint touring with Hal 'Lonepine' Breau, a country singer and father of the jazz guitarist, Lenny Breau. Invited to join the cast of *Singalong Jubilee*, another CBC TV production, MacLellan was introduced to a rising talent named Anne Murray and began a professional relationship that would change both of their lives. Murray remembers him fondly, "He was quiet and very unassuming, but he had a wonderful, wicked sense of

humour."

Throughout her career Murray would record a dozen or more of MacLellan's compositions, most notably *Snowbird*, a catchy, singable melody articulating the sorrow of false love. "Gene told me he wrote the song in 20 minutes when he was walking on a beach in P.E.I.," she says. "It's so appropriate, the mental picture of Gene – this frail little guy on the beach in the middle of winter, seeing these birds and conjuring up this image."

"Gene was a wonderful poet and a wonderful man and his gift of a song started me on a career that continues to amaze me."

The success of Anne Murray's recording of *Snowbird* in 1970 overshadowed the release of MacLellan's self-titled, first album recorded in Nashville that same year. A slightly modified album was released in the U.S. a few months later

under the title *Street Corner Preacher*. He was married that year and at the age of 32; it seemed like things were coming together at last.

In the early seventies, musicals like *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* played on Broadway. The timing was perfect for MacLellan's gospel song, *Put Your Hand in the Hand*. A knockoff version of the song was recorded by an unknown Canadian group called Ocean, resulting in another

huge radio hit.

"What I start out with is a sound. I get a sound in my head. Writing tunes, to me, is the easiest part," Gene told music journalist, Larry Leblanc. "I have to be in the frame of mind to write. I just can't sit down and write any old time."

At the peak of his success in 1971, he was playing venues like the CNE, Massey Hall and even the Miss Teen Canada Pageant. TV wanted him, concert promoters wanted him, and he wanted out.

"I'm getting awfully tired of the business," he told journalists. "I'd just like to be by myself for the next few years, but that's impossible the way things are going." A year later, his marriage failed and he sold his farm. He tried to give away the rights to his songs and left the spotlight completely for five years.

The Gene MacLellan who returned to the public eye in 1977 had a quiet confidence and renewed sense of purpose. He had an album of new songs, *If It's Alright With You*, had remarried and started a family. Continuing to write songs, MacLellan would involve himself in two collaborative recordings before his death – *Gene & Marty* with Marty Reno and *Reunion* with Janice Lapointe.

For all of the positives in his life, he still struggled with severe bouts of depression. In January of 1995, shortly after returning home from a hospital stay, MacLellan took his own life. He was buried in a churchyard in rural PEI.

"He was such a gentle presence. He touched a lot of people and he left a string of songs that everyone knows," said Lennie Gallant.

Since his death, Gene MacLellan has been honoured with numerous awards and his name was given to a drop-in centre for ex-offenders in Nova Scotia. *Snowbird*, was one of the first songs inducted into the new Canadian Songwriter's Hall of Fame. *Put Your Hand in the Hand* joined it in February of last year.



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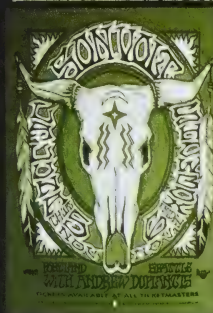
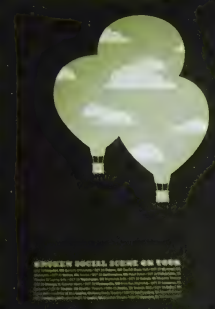
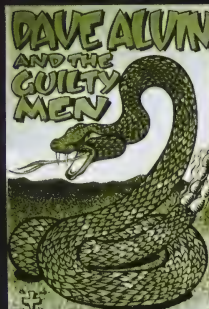
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The Voice Squad

The a cappella Québécois trio, Serre L'Écoute, research and record obscure traditional sea songs uncovered around the shores of the Saint Lawrence. Yves Bernard reckons their singing is trailblazing and timeless

Early this summer, the trio Serre L'Écoute released *Fortunes et Pertitions*, their fabulous second album of old-time singing. Their timeless, almost ancient voices, undoubtedly elevate traditional Québécois music to a new pinnacle. Along with Les Charbonniers de L'enfer and Galant tu Perds Ton Temps, Serre L'Écoute stand at the summit of traditional Québécois vocal art.

Each band, though, is clearly different. Serre L'Écoute's three members often sing a cappella in unison or in harmony, alternating solos, while continuing call and responses. Their instrumentation, too, never lets us forget the essentials. The arrangements remain sober and bare – a violin, an accordion, a guitar or a bouzouki, all played discretely while a harmonica can add a light trace of the blues. In every case, the voices are of most importance.

Serre L'Écoute's adventure started in 1998, when the Association Bretonne de Chasse-Marée asked the ethnologist Robert Bouthillier, living in Brittany at the time, to collaborate on the production of the album *Chants et Complaintes Maritimes des Terres Françaises d'Amérique*, for the *Anthologie des Chansons de Mer* collection. The project represented a real challenge, because Québec, unlike Brittany, England and the U.S.A., had no artists who specialized in that type of repertoire.

"We were a colony," explains Bouthillier. "The fleets were metropolitan and we didn't have large crews – only three or four sailors at a time for coastal fishing. We knew nothing of the work songs on the whaling ships or other cross-Atlantic vessels. But maritime laments and historical songs highlighting travels and navigation on the Saint-Laurent were found."

The disc was released in 2000 after two years of research, which provided an unexpected abundance of material on this theme. Ontarian, Québécois and Acadian songs figure on it, as well as songs from Newfoundland and Louisiana. One of the pieces is performed by Gabrielle Bouthillier, Robert's daughter, who is following in her father's footsteps, and accompanied by Liette Remon, an excellent violinist from a rich Gaspesien instrumental heritage. This was the pair's first collaboration. They later met again, at the heart of The Strada old-time music ensemble. They then joined forces with Robert to form Serre L'Écoute.

In 2001, a commanding group was formed. *Chants et complaintes Maritimes des Terres*



Françaises d'Amérique created the demand. Festivals wanted them: Paimpol in Brittany and Saint-Jean Port-Joli in Québec. As a result of their successes, they released their self-produced debut *Chansons des bords du Saint-Laurent* in 2002.

Concerned about becoming known only as Québécois traditional musicians interested in sailing songs, they broadened their repertoire with their latest rock-solid release, *Fortunes et Pertitions*, which features songs from the Québécois and Acadian coasts.

"We searched for melodies that pleased us. We chose songs, dramatic, tragic laments, melodies to harmonize with, some with funny lyrics. We wanted to show the diversity in styles and esthetics," explains Bouthillier.

"Back in the old days, people would sing these pieces in every situation. Before the radio or television, singing songs was the only entertainment. It spontaneously happened under all sorts of circumstances, a definite part of people's everyday life. Singers told me that when you worked on a house frame, you would sing all day to bolster your spirit. The funny or dirty songs were sometimes an important part of parties. But I also collected laments such as *Le jour de l'Assomption* or *L'empoisonneuse*. People sang them in very intimate circumstances."

By listening carefully, you get the impression that the members of the trio sing as it used to be

done, staying as close as possible to the source, far from the influence of instruments such as the guitar or the piano.

"That's true," confirms Robert. "Our main inspiration comes from being a cappella. If we work with vocal harmonies, we remain, nonetheless, far from a choir esthetic. We want to keep an essential natural quality."

How well does Serre L'Écoute represent the old fashioned sound?

"The history shows through intonation, how we work the sound. We're pretty ornamental, but in a traditional way. We can sing in a very syllabic way, by vibrating a few notes, but only as the old Acadian singers did. We don't try, though, to reproduce the accent. On the other hand, if we stay quite close to the vocal esthetics of oral tradition singers, we musically scale them a bit differently".

To enrich the songs, the band members sometimes edited several versions to come up with a unified compromise.

"It isn't an ethnologist's job, but rather a musician's. We sometimes create a version of a song from many separate fragments. We make something as complete as possible with the knowledge available. It's quite a challenge on your vocabulary. We have to make choices."

While we wait for their next album, which will be about drinking, enjoy the excellence of *Fortunes et Pertitions*.



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Redemption Songs

Lennie Gallant's Acadian heritage inspired him to write and record in French. Fish Grigowsky has a chat about Gallant's fine new recording, *When We Get There*, and his recent trip to Afghanistan.

A master of metaphor, Lennie Gallant is sitting comfortably in his sister's cottage, writing songs once again in PEI. Home. "Bits and pieces of songs, anyway," he laughs. But of course, that's how it all begins.

He's just come back from workshoping the Edmonton Folk Fest where we'd started a conversation – his soft, pinch-of-Acadian voice somewhat overwhelmed by a nameless crooner dominating Alberta's most famous musical hill. The last few days he's been in more familiar haunts, easing out of a long summer on the folk circuit, what he calls the "yo-yo tours." He sounds more relaxed now; it's always good to come home.

Gallant grew up in a large family on the North Shore of the isle, in a fair-sized town called Rustico, formed long ago by Acadians disinterested in capture and deportation by the British during the Seven Years' War.

"I was big into hockey," he explains, also citing the blind justice of Marvel's Daredevil comics to help pass those early seasons. "Very much a typical Canadian kid. Ball hockey in the summer and ice hockey in the winter. I got a guitar when I was about 13. Just fell in love with the idea of playing and started writing songs almost immediately. I began writing songs before I learned any chords."

Before he came to craft the sensitive, slightly twisted perspectives he's now so good at conveying, Gallant wrote songs about "fooling things that I probably didn't understand yet. You're 14 years old, trying to write love songs and you know absolutely nothing about it. Songs about things that were happening on TV. But I was big fan of Bob Dylan right off the bat, and Gordon Lightfoot." Fine mentors both, storytellers who, like Gallant, bare their souls in non-indulgent ways.

"It's an interesting community that I grew up in – primarily Acadian, but the language was lost around the time of my grandparents. Too bad, because there are other Acadian communities that were able to hang on to it. We were a small community surrounded by a lot of English. But now it's making a comeback. My nephews are in a French school, speaking French better than I.

"I didn't speak any French until I was in my 20s. I started hanging out with Acadian friends. We had a similar upbringing, yet there was this wall every time I'd walk into a room ... they'd start speaking English for my benefit. It would drive me crazy because I knew I was part of the problem at that



Lennie Gallant

point. So I learned French and tried to do it through music, writing French songs and even an entire album, which was one of the more difficult things I've ever tried doing. I'm glad I did, it was a lot of fun and surprisingly successful."

He's seven albums in now, the latest, *When We Get There*, answering several rhetorical questions about the journey. On the strength of his work, and much to his surprise, Gallant was asked to play to Canadian troops in Afghanistan.

"I was called by the government. It was a very secretive thing with a member from each party – Peter Mackay, Alexa McDonough from the NDP and Byron Wilfert. They told me I had a couple of hours to decide and were leaving the day after tomorrow. 'Oh, and you can't tell anybody, because of the dignitaries!'"

"Of course I wanted to go. I didn't tell anybody, my folks saw it on the news. It was quite a shock to them – I was on the national news in the middle of Afghanistan." He mimics what must surely be his dad: "'What the hell!'"

"I was very impressed by the courage of the people I met there. The tenacity and intelligence they displayed. My own personal feelings about what is going on there aside, I was there to give the soldiers a break."

This gets us talking politics for a while, Gallant being particularly impressed by revelations from Al Gore's An Inconvenient Truth, which he thought would be "just preaching to the converted." It's a theme he'd explored in his new song *I Want to Save the World for You*. He even admits that if he could choose on super power, he'd have some kind of super breath to chill the ice caps. But when it comes down to it, there has to be a story in

every song. That's Gallant's appeal.

"I like being creative. I get a tremendous charge, sitting down to write a song, especially when it's all working. It's a very cool idea to take that up to a stage and have people react to it."

The Innkeeper, for example, might come off as the story of one of the first Christian converts. But Gallant says it's deeper than just a twist on the Nativity. "It's a redemption song. Someone who's been so inside himself, not letting love or the idea of forgiveness come in, this nasty character who turns people away, but ends up forgiven despite that. Many of us have played the innkeeper at one time or another – I certainly have."

There Must Be Another Song, meanwhile, deals with resurrection, this of an instrument: "It's funny, I have a friend in Halifax who's been working on guitars for years. He's looked after mine, including a little double-o Martin 1954 that I've written most of my songs on. I had him over for dinner one night and we talked about his life in the industry. He left around midnight and I wanted to write a song about him. But it ended not being about him at all, about this character who finds this guitar in an auction, but it's important that he resurrects it. I finished it at about 4 a.m. and put it on a cassette tape and mailed it to him, since he kind of inspired it. But he sent me a message back and said, 'How could you know that story?'"

"Sometimes you don't feel like the writer – you feel like the conduit for these songs. They exist outside of you somehow. That happens to me all the time at the guitar shops. With wood, there's a certain energy that's just lurking in there. You pick up a guitar and feel like there's a song inside, waiting for you."





Ed Stilley

Luthier of the Ozarks

Ed Stilley is a former Baptist preacher, farmer and self-taught guitar builder who lives in the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas in a place called Hogscald Holler.

I first came across him about 10 years ago while visiting some friends in Fayetteville — I was intrigued by a very odd looking, hand-hewn red fiddle I had noticed hanging up on their wall. I asked my friends where it had come from, and they told me of an old man who lived in the mountains who claimed to have had a vision in which God instructed him to build instruments to give to children. I was fascinated.

In the summer of 2003 I returned to Arkansas to house-sit another friend's cabin for a few weeks. I had not forgotten about Ed Stilley, and one day decided to take my chances and see if I couldn't find

him. An oldtimer pointed me in the general direction of Hogscald Holler and, following my intuition, I set out along the backroads.

After several random turns, at the bottom of a steep dirt trail, I saw a hand-carved sign nailed to a post. I recognized the style at once and pulled over. Next to the sign was a rusted mailbox with the name 'Ed Stilley' scratched onto the side. I had pretty well driven straight to his door.

A few minutes later, I was sitting in the front room of the house Ed had built himself, trying to explain to him and his wife, Eliza, how I had driven all the way from Canada, how I had seen his fiddle on my friend's wall so many years before ... they were just as curious about me as I was about them. Half an hour later, I was helping them feed the cows and plough the potato crop on their

mountain farm above the homestead. We worked all day, Ed driving the 1947 tractor and Eliza and me following behind, putting potatoes into sacks.

Later that night, Ed read from the Bible while Eliza proudly brought out several of Ed's guitars. We sang and played hymns until dark.

I spent the next few days with them, and returned again the following springtime. I took photographs as we worked on the farm, as Ed worked on his guitars, and as we played and traded songs on his beautiful instruments. I continue to be incredibly moved and humbled by the Stilleys and their simple, honest lifestyle, as well as their deep faith in God and dedication to a way of life that, unfortunately, seems to be valued less and less in this fast-paced world we now live in.

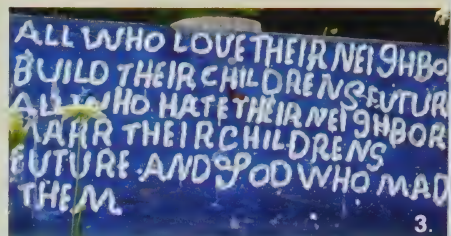
— All text and photos by Samantha Parton



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1: Ed. and Eliza Stilley work the fields with their 1947 tractor. 2: A look inside one of Ed's guitars. 3: A sign on the Stilley's drive way. Ed's colourful guitars. Ed in his workshop working on his instruments.



5.



Dan Reeder "Sweetheart"



Dan Reeder's new second album *Sweetheart* isn't so much a sequel to his wonderful, out-of-nowhere, out-of-time debut, as it is an extension of – a more freewheeling elaboration on – his first musical offering. *Sweetheart* is about the sound of Dan Reeder's cracked, dry, confiding voice and the pleasant noises he gets out of his homemade guitars, his multi-tracked harmonies with himself and his occasional puff on a harmonica.

"Reeder is someone who is squarely in the American tradition of independence and self-imposed isolation, yet who wants to share these qualities with others, because he wants to connect with his fellow isolates, to let us know we're not alone ..." - Ken Tucker, *Entertainment Weekly* & NPR's "Fresh Air"



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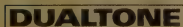
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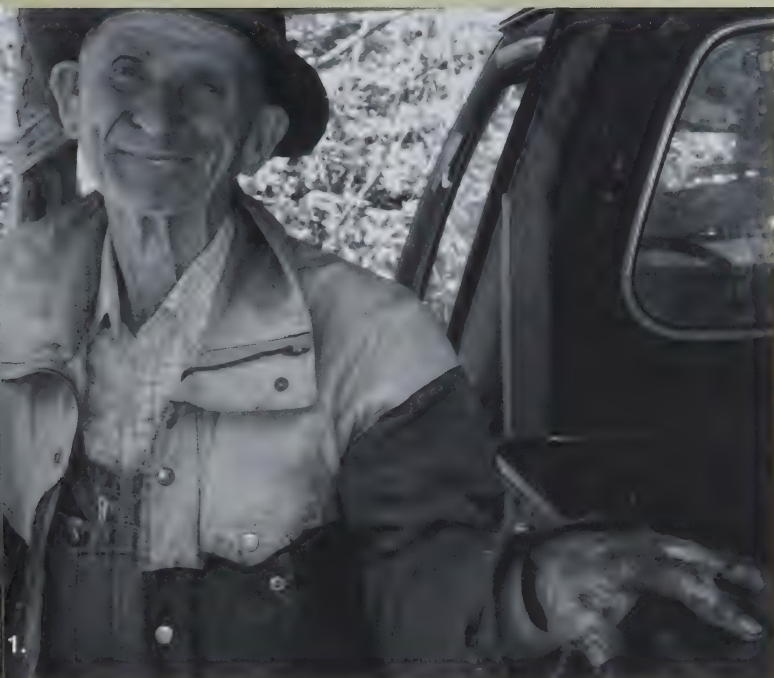
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1: Ed Stilley. 2: Ed and Eliza. 3: Ed's Workshop where he makes his guitars. 4: Gathering rhubarb. 5: Ed plays his butterfly guitar.





Down From The Mountain

Old-time mountain music appears on the brink of a revival. And Vancouver trio, Dyad, certainly give credence to the case with their masterful, all-acoustic, bare essentials, new release *No Pedlars, No Preachers*. Roddy Campbell hears how it took two attempts and a year off in England to get it right.

They still work their day jobs, Dyad do. But if *No Pedlars Or Preachers* is anything to go by, Leah Abramson, Kori Miyanishi and Shiho Mizumoto may yet prep their resignations for the post. This second release from the Vancouver-based, acoustic trio justifies all the considerable

praise lavished on their riveting debut *Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone*.

Like its predecessor, *No Pedlars Or Preachers'* spiritual heart belongs in the Blue Ridge Mountains of West Virginia and North Carolina. It's full of big, bold and frequently eerie traditional ballads, flushed-out with a pair of shit-kicking fiddle tunes, which no doubt crawled originally from earthen jugs of corn-mash, moonshine whiskey.

Furthermore, this recording introduces Miyanishi as a songwriter of considerable capability. His *Darling Little Girl*, *Red Moon* and *None But The Sun* are all clearly cut from a traditional

template and fit seamlessly alongside such Anglo-American ballads as *Wake O Wake You Drowsy Sleeper* or *A Soldier Travelling From The North*.

Miyanishi's three songs emerged polished and perfected from a year-long sabbatical in England. While his wife studied for a masters degree in cultural studies at London's Goldsmith College, he wrote and hung out in cafes and folk clubs with open mics. Banjo in hand, he wound up at the Easycome Acoustic Club in the Ivy House pub in south-east London run by the colourful Andy Allen, a member of the Hank Dogs and a former bass player with the Sex Pistols.

"Apparently it is London's longest running acoustic club," says Miyanishi. "There's a huge appetite for anything American. It's phenomenal. I usually brought my banjo and as soon as I started playing the place became deathly silent. It was quite spooky but they were really into it. When I came back from England at the end of August last year, I felt like a horse in a stable before a race. I was just like, 'Let's go now. Practice, practice, practice'."

Obviously, all the momentum built by *Who's Been Here*... came to a screeching halt because of that trip. Other obstacles also took their toll. Stephani Custers, their marvelous singer and fiddle player, left the band to be replaced by local singer-songwriter Leah Abramson on guitar. Abramson then fell ill with bronchitis during a first attempt at recording *No Pedlars*. Although they recorded nine tracks, they collectively felt only three of these deserved a second chance.

"We hadn't been playing together very long and we knew we could do better," says Miyanishi.

With everybody healthy and Miyanishi rejuvenated by his experiences abroad, Dyad again set about making *No Pedlars*... And this time around they got it right. Advance copies were sent out in mid-summer and it's a masterful assimilation of old ways and weathered, acoustic arrangements splendidly stripped to the bare essentials of banjo, guitar and fiddle.

"I think that whole first record, we were messing about with a bunch of different ideas. Stephani did have a large [Celtic] influence. We thought we'd try stuff out. For this one, I was more interested in keeping it pretty straight ahead. We didn't want to try anything except what was coming out naturally. I think the songs that have been recognized best, even from the first [record], are the ones that came out with the least amount of effort. So just going with that more than, 'Hey, this would be a good idea', as opposed to, 'This is how it's coming out. Don't mess around with it'."

And then there's Kori Miyanishi's singing. His voice appears deeper now and more ornamental. Whatever, his raw, hair-raising interpretations of *Gathering Flowers* and the a cappella *A Soldier*

Travelling From The North may rival Ralph Stanley's startling *O' Death* for their intensity and emotional wallop. Miyanishi cites such southern ballad singers as Dillard Chandler and Roscoe Holcomb as his principal influences. Jody Stecher, too, initially.

"When I started out I was emulating. I've tried to get away from the emulating and just sing and see what happens. A lot of influences from different kinds of music have crept in over the years. I guess now I'm letting them come out as they will."

Kori Miyanishi grew up in Winnipeg with a natural predilection for hardcore punk and industrial dance music. An epiphany at the 1994 Winnipeg Folk Festival put an end to all of that malarkey, though. At a workshop there, Jody Stecher and Kate Brislin performed *Elkhorn Ridge* with two banjos. Miyanishi was completely gobsmacked. He immediately purchased a banjo for \$100 in a local pawn shop.

"It was almost like a religious experience... getting into it," he told me in 2004. "I've always been into darker music and the stories that came along with it. Part of it is the intensity but there's also a huge amount of poetry, especially in the ballads. I found that there's no getting around an unaccompanied ballad... The good ones just clobbered me."

Within a year he had moved to Vancouver and went looking for like-minded musicians to jam with. Shiho Mizumoto had similar ideas. Born and raised in Tokyo, Japan, she studied classical music on the violin until she heard Byron Berline play fiddle on the Rolling Stones' *Country Honk*. That track on *Let It Bleed* opened up a door of infinite possibilities, including the blues.

Meanwhile, she worked in a music club frequented by American soldiers and they inspired her to travel. Canada gave her a work visa and she moved to Vancouver in 1992, not intending to stay. Three years later the musical maverick fortuitously posted ads in shop windows and on lamp posts.

"I was looking for any sort of musician," she says. "I think I put down Van Morrison and the Rolling Stones as influences. I might have mentioned I liked fiddle music at one point."

Despite the dodgy credentials, Miyanishi gave her a call. And her first impression?

"He was a young man and his taste in music was rather odd," says she. "I didn't know much about old-time mountain music, but it was fun, more fun than I thought."

Miyanishi, meanwhile, added the fiddle to his arsenal and totally immersed himself in traditional American music. In 2000, he spent six weeks meeting and recording various traditional singers and musicians in North Carolina and West Virginia. It helped that Erynn Marshall – a former banjo pupil of his from Victoria, BC – was doing research for her MA thesis in Ethnomusicology in

the region at the time [see P.E. No. 28 – the Ed].

"She was already in West Virginia for about a year," says Miyanishi. "Her sole intent was to speak to the old fiddle players. At the time, there was a couple – Jamie Triplett, a fiddle player, and Helena Triplett who was a ballad singer. Erynn was associated with them. Through Helena Triplett I spent a day going to visit Phyllis Marks, who is a blind ballad singer."

"Later on, Erynn took me to visit Lester and Linda McCumbers [from Calhoun County]. Lester is known quite well as a fiddle player and his wife, to a lesser extent, is known as a singer. Linda seemed quieter, shier. Lester's very boisterous and more outgoing. Erynn egged on Linda to do more singing. So we got some fantastic songs out of her in a real rough and raw country voice. She sang a killer version of *Pretty Polly*. I had my mini-disc recording this whole thing. She introduced the song and right away I hit record and sat transfixed by her ferocious attack on the song. When she was finished, I hit pause and noticed that the batteries had died so I got none of it."

"Being with Erynn was a great and easy way to be introduced to these people. It would have been different, obviously, had she not been down there. She certainly opened a few windows into the world of traditional music down there."

Closer to home, Miyanishi discovered a rare copy of the Frank C. Brown, seven-volume collection of mountain songs in the Vancouver Public Library. And, of course, he resorted to more conventional sources: LPs such as *The Watson Family* and *The Watson Family Tradition*, recorded by

Ralph Rinzler and Daniel Seeger in Deep Gap, NC, in 1964, for Folkways Records.

With more material than they knew what to do with, Miyanishi and Mizumoto recruited fiddler Stephani Custers, primarily as a singer, from a local Irish band. Together they irrefutably stamped their identity on the all-traditional, *Who's Been Here Since I've Been Gone*. With three fiddles how could they fail? Duly respectful of the tradition, they nonetheless, had their own ideas about arrangements. While they would sparingly include Custers Celtic influences, their treatment of the Watson Family's pearl, *Omie Wise*, typifies their flexibility and creativity.

"One day Shiho was playing *Man of Constant Sorrow* and she said, 'See if you can sing *Omie Wise* with this melody.' I kind of went, 'That's not how it goes,' in a stodgy voice. But then I listened to it and went, 'you know, I really like this melody. That's how it ended up for us.'"

Despite rave reviews for their debut disc, Custers handed in her notice.

"At the time I thought, 'This is going to be tough.' Because, I didn't know anybody who was into traditional music as seriously as Stephani," says Miyanishi. "And I didn't know anybody, really, who had the sense towards the music that we felt we had, which was a little more into the darker side of old-time music. But I talked to Leah [Abramson] a few times. I liked the way she was making music and pretty much on a whim I asked her, 'What do you think about coming over and singing some songs with us?'"

Leah Abramson was born and raised in Burnaby,



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BC. She sang in choirs and played the piano until old enough to baulk. Still, by the time she met Miyanishi, she had developed a local reputation as a singer-songwriter of considerable talent. His offer raised a few doubts, apparently.

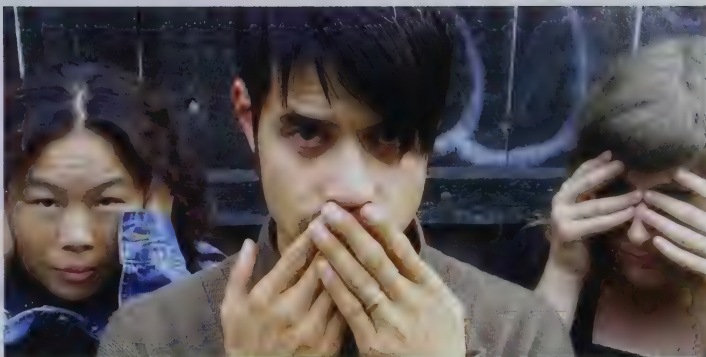
"I was pretty skeptical about it, actually," says Abramson. "I had just gone electric and I was thinking to myself, 'This is exactly what I am trying to get away from.' It wasn't actually a huge stretch but it was definitely a turn in the opposite direction where I had come.

"He was like, 'Just come over and play some tunes.' And I was like, 'Okay, I'll try it. I don't know if it will work but I will give it a try.' So I gave it a try and I found that I really, really enjoyed singing harmonies.

"There's a lonesomeness about [mountain music], especially in the ballads. My family is Jewish and there's a certain mournfulness that I can hear in both [traditions]. Folk music around the world has similar qualities. So it wasn't a far stretch for me once I started listening; it seemed familiar."

The title of the new disc comes from an old sign that hung outside an equally old house Abramson rented near a church. It clearly struck a note.

"I just liked the way that it rolled off the tongue, *No Pedlars, No Preachers*," says Miyanishi. "And I guess I started listening to the songs on the record



and there are a lot that look at the spiritual world and the material world. There's people dying and gambling. It ended up reflecting some of the themes on the record and it looked good."

Dyad – it means a musical chord consisting of two notes – will officially release *No Pedlars, No Preachers* at the Rogue Folk Club in Vancouver, September 16. In the meantime Kori Miyanishi will continue as a special-education teacher with the Vancouver School Board. Leah Abramson will report for her job at a small local theatre. And Shiho Mizumoto will spend the bulk of her time with her new baby, born just a week-and-a-half be-

fore their prestigious summer gig at the Vancouver Folk Music Festival. Yet, for all of their day-to-day financial responsibilities, Dyad justifiably approach the coming months with a calm confidence and an unshakeable belief in themselves.

"Old-time music has rarely been a commercial venture," says Miyanishi. "I don't know if you want to call it a revival, necessarily, but there seems to be a lot of people our age coming into it as much for a sense of collective belonging, an alternative. It has that accessible, underground punk rock esthetic that appeals to people."



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Jeff Tweedy (in green) and Wilco

Jeffy Tweedy

The Penguin Eggs Interview

Jeff Tweedy ain't no folk singer. So he says. But, he is from Chicago, and he is the lead member of Wilco – a combo formed after the very public break up of alt.country poster boys, Uncle Tupelo in the early 1990s. Tweedy and long time (ex)friend, Jay Farrar (Son Volt) virtually invented the genre. Since their inception in 1994, Wilco has released six albums, Yankee Hotel Foxtrot ironically being their best seller. David Kahne – the acting head of Reprise Records – disliked it so much he let the band buy it back from the label. They subsequently put it on their website for free before selling it to Nonesuch Records. Of course, in 1998, Tweedy and Wilco collaborated with Billy Bragg on the wonderful Mermaid Avenue (1998) and Mermaid Avenue Vol. II (2000). Both these discs featured previously unreleased lyrics of Woody Guthrie's set to music by Bragg and Wilco. Besides Wilco, Tweedy also performs and records with Golden Smog and Loose Furs.

For all of his prodigious talents, however,

Tweedy has continually battled personal demons. He beat alcoholism while in Uncle Tupelo. And two years ago he ended an addiction to painkillers, essential, he thought, to combating migraines. Without a chemical crutch, he suffered panic attacks so bad he ended up in rehab where he was treated for the depression and anxiety that caused the migraines in the first place. "I remember thinking my God, this is what happened when people started writing about Hell," he told Q magazine. This interview – a national conference call – took place prior to Wilco's summer tour. Penguin Eggs' questions: by Philip Harries.

How would you describe your current connection to roots music?

The same as it has always been. I mean, I am, the term they used to call people 'mouldy fig'. I generally gravitate towards music before the widespread proliferation of electronic media. I like things that happened before WWII – quite a bit. That is the

music I like and play predominately by myself at home. Although, at the same time, I am really thrilled and excited by the prospects available, or possibilities open to a rock band. As a collective of people, that has been the most exciting thing in my life. But as far as exploiting roots, or saying that is a defining element or something, I find that very ludicrous, and also very constricting, and not fair to the people who actually make roots [music]. I don't think there is anybody left, honestly, that really makes true folk music. I think the term has become so far removed from what it was really intended. I don't know what anybody would accurately call or describe folk music anymore.

You mentioned the next album will be more organic in nature. Are you moving back to acoustic music?

I have not been playing acoustic guitar hardly at all. There are very few songs that we have recorded that have an acoustic guitar on them. But at the same time, I think people would most likely hear

this music we have been working on as being classic in the way it's put together, and the types of arrangements – very traditional and natural feeling. [We're] just trying to do what feels right for the songs and the sentiment that we want to sing about.

Your next album will be with Wilco, solo, with another artist, or a sideline project?

The next record is going to be with Wilco, definitely! There is a live DVD that will be coming out with some solo performances I did on the west coast. So it will be a live, solo, acoustic DVD, but it is not like an official record release. I think it's mostly material from a past record.

Has the songwriting dynamics changed with the addition of new members Nels Cline and Pat Sansone?

Well, the best way I can describe it is, we sit around in a circle in the studio with no headphones, and as close together as we can be, and we play music together. I am kind of writing in the real time with the band. The communication is as uninhibited and as direct as anything as I have ever experienced with one person, much less with six people. So, I really don't want to jinx it. I couldn't ask for anything more. It has been really fantastic. And a lot of it is that Pat and Nels are such wonderful musicians and are so quick to grasp ideas and come up with things. The communication stays fresh and we really can focus on a song for a long, long time before anyone gets bored or tired.

***Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* was put online before its release date. It became your biggest selling album. What did that say about your audience?**

Well, I can say a lot of things. That certainly is an indication that we have people download it and do the right thing and help support the band. I think there is a lot of good faith between Wilco and its audience. The industry was cynically not able to see that at that time, but they are seeing it a lot more. The Internet, is, in a lot of ways, this generation's version of the radio. That's how they hear things and where they fall in love with things. And there is nothing wrong with people falling in love with more music – whatever it takes.

The *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot* anecdote about giving away the album away free online is often told about how the music industry is changing. How has that change affected that you do?

It has certainly has changed how we put out our music. I think it has also reinforced a lot of our

firmly held beliefs of what it is that we are doing. I think early on, before the experience with *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, I wanted to look at the band as being part of an art collective, not necessarily as part of some sort of business endeavour where you put out a piece of plastic every year or two years and sell it. I always wanted to be something that people were a part of. Even if we didn't have a record deal, we would get together and have a wonderful, gratifying thing happen that we could look back on at the end of the day and say we made something that was not there. I know that sounds idealistic but it all played out. Losing the record deal was disheartening in some ways, but it was also a chance to reaffirm those beliefs and it worked out, for us.

How is your health?

Never better. Thanks for asking. That's my standard answer these days. I feel like I am better shape than I have ever been. I am running five or six miles a day. I'm thinking of running some races this summer. This was stuff I had never been able to do even in high school. I think I am doing good.

I have not had a migraine in almost two years and I haven't had a cigarette in over a year. All kinds of things are changing for me, and I am, honestly, I am not exaggerating. I don't think I have ever felt better.

Touring and recording with Wilco, working on other projects, how do you juggle everything?

I don't really know. I don't really consider it as a difficult balancing act at all. I would be much, much more challenged by the idea if I had to go to work 9-5 every day of the week. I don't have to work very hard. I get to be home a lot with the kids. That's been wonderful. I feel like I am leading a charmed existence. I don't know, it's what I get to do, so I do it.

Why the need for Loose Fur?

The idea Loose Fur is kind of based around the opportunity to get together with Jim [O'Rourke] and Glenn [Kotche] and just have the three of us be solely responsible for making every piece of music together. We wrote all those songs together [on *Loose Fur* and *Born Again In The USA*]. We wrote all those lyrics together. It was just like a real collective experience. It's not like a vacation from a day job as much as it's just another thing to do. Wilco has always been my band to some degree. My name has always been on the contract and it's always been my responsibility to put the records together and all that stuff. But at the same time, Wilco is very much about having a group collec-

tive thing happen that is different from Loose Fur.

A lot of the stops on your Canadian tour are theatre settings. Does playing to a seated audience present any specific challenges?

It's different. This band, I think we have gotten really good at playing to medium sized to large sit-down audiences and it works pretty well most of the time. I certainly think we are more than comfortable playing to a rowdier stand-up audience, a general admission, that's definitely where we come from and we have been for the longest time. I think that one of the benefits of having a pretty diverse catalogue of music to choose from, is that we can definitely cater the sets to the different environments a little bit easier than I would imagine some bands could. It's not that big of challenge. Does that answer your question?

You have managed to make the melodic and the noisy cohabitate. Why are you drawn to such positions?

I don't really know. I have always admired people that make music that is very focused and very coherent in terms of conveying a certain type of emotion. Over the years I have gravitated to people more like Neil Young or Bob Dylan, who wrap themselves up in a much broader emotional range. That makes sense to me because I feel that's more like our experiences as human beings. I don't ever experience one emotion or feeling for very long. I am pleased that our music is encompassing more than one thing.

Are you reticent introducing the experimental aspects of your records into the live show?

I don't think too much about it either way. I think that if we present things and we put some of those ideas on records and integrate them, then there is no reason to think that an audience that came to see us play would not expect that. Wilco is in a weird situation in some ways because the records have been pretty diverse over the years and there can be some factions of people that only like the early, the first two records, or *Summer Teeth*, or whatever. I guess that all evens out as you get a big enough audience.

I remember you polled the crowd of what their favourite albums were. A couple people answered AM, and you asked them what are they doing there.

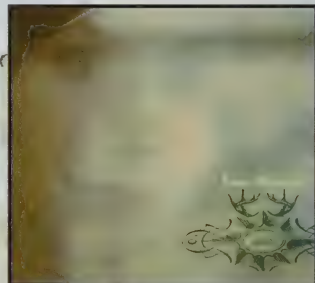
Yeah. I think it is like a high school reunion for them. I don't know.



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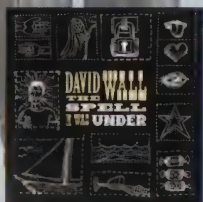
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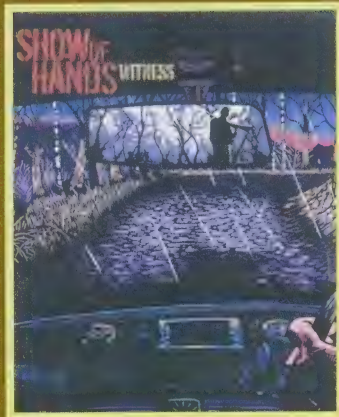
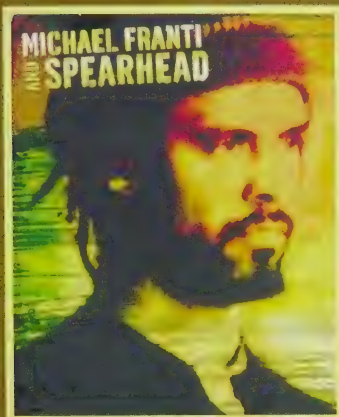
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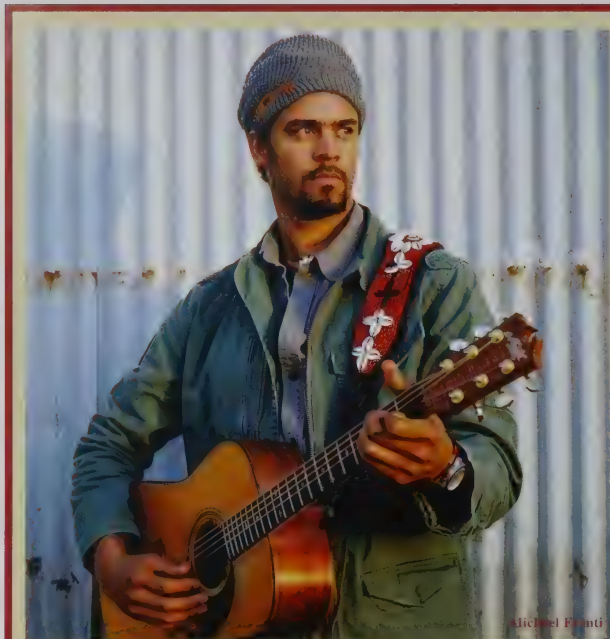


Battlefield Band



k.d. lang

Plus: Albums by Ralph Stanley, Blackie & The Rodeo Kings, Jenny Whiteley, James Hill, The Sadies, Rae Spoon & Rodney DeCoo, Prairie Oyster, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Jim Moray, Seth Fleck & The Flecktones, Greg Brown, Sarah Bumell, Richard Thompson, Enoch Kent, K'eb Mo', Li'l Ed & The Blues Imperials, Linda Ronstadt & Anne Savoy, Valle Son.



Michael Franti

Yell Fire!
Sugar Shack

The world has gone to hell in a handbasket. Unbelievable atrocities are now carried out on a daily basis in the name of religion or democracy. The death toll in Iraq and Afghanistan continues to mount. There the increasing civil casualties are merely dismissed as collateral damage. The Middle East, meanwhile, remains mired in a conflict with no foreseeable solution. These travesties are never off our TV screens. And yet, with very few notable exceptions, few songwriters have expressed their anger or frustration about these ongoing issues. Perhaps it's no coincidence that American Idol is the most popular show on television.

Enter one Michael Franti. Franti went to several war zones in the Middle East to see the results of the various conflicts first hand. His trip provided the inspiration for the majestically upbeat and optimistic roots-rock-reggae masterwork that is *Yell Fire!*

*"Revolution never comes with a warning
Revolution never sends you an omen
Revolution just arrives like the morning"*

he sings on the stirring opening track *Time To Go Home*. It's a clarion call to bring the troops home. And it's this thoughtful, poignant writing and brave stance that makes this disc so gripping. Not since Marley's and Tosh's *Burning* has a reggae record packed such a bunch. Sure the polemics are frequently hard hitting, and fingers are firmly pointed, but this isn't an exercise in brow-beating. Even a title like *Tell Me Lies* cruises along on an undertow of gentle truths. Indeed, *Tolerance*, *Hello Bonjour* and *Is Love Enough?* map out his hopes for a better future. He even takes a gloriously raucous detour with *Hey Now Now*—a tribute to making this album in Jamaica and its music. And yet epics like *See You In The Light* and *I Know I'm Not Alone*—gorgeous eulogies to the simpler pleasures in his life—come across more akin to the English roots-rock of Oysterband in full flight than any descendant of The Wailers.

How often can you truthfully describe an album as sublime from start to finish? Very, very rarely. Well, count on *Yell Fire!* This wonderful, wonderful disc is truly a contender for album of the year.

—By Roddy Campbell

Jenny Whiteley

Dear
Black Hen Music

Her third disc and follow-up to her twin Juno-Award-winning debut and sophomore recordings *Jenny Whiteley* and *Hopetown*. Steve Dawson (of Zubot & Dawson) is at the helm again and does a superior job at letting her experiment and grow as a songwriter, while keeping her grounded in her country and bluegrass roots. Whiteley seems calm, centered and fully in control here. Chris Coole of The Foggy Hometown Boys guests, as does Jim Byrnes. Dawson supports on various instruments and her brother, Dan, and father, Chris, pitch in on mandolin and trumpet and flugelhorn respectively. Guitarist, Joey Wright, scores a couple of co-writing credits. The standout tracks are *Four Storey Story*, *Every Minute That You're In It* and *When It Rains I Pour*. Whiteley continues to rack up major points on a solid career path.

—By Barry Hammond.

Serre l'Ecoule

Fortunes et Perditions
Scorbut

After their show at Quebec's FIAT festival, I bounded to the cd table to buy their 2002 release as a gift for my mother. I wound up keeping it. And you can bet that I'm going to keep *Fortunes and Perditions* too. Comparable in scope and talent to Finest Kind, Quebec City singing trio Serre l'Ecoule is composed of a star-studded cast Gabrielle Bouthillier, accordionist and arranger with the perfect folk-singer's voice, father Robert, folklorist with magical, powerful vocal chords, and friend Liette Remon, also known for her

fiddling talents. With acapella singing as their focus, the trio employs a number of techniques—unusual harmonic intervals, unison, drones, and solo singing keep this disc interesting from start to end. Robert's *Dessus le pont de Nantes* is unusually bluesy with a guest on harmonica, dialogue song, *Jeanette*, is fun and catchy. Liette and Gabrielle's accordion-voice duet *Le Pecheur et la Jardiniere* is sweet, and a number of ballads are truly beautiful. The inimitable Jean-Philippe Reny adds guitar and bouzouki to a few numbers. For the vocal harmony enthusiast, French-dumb or not, *Serre l'Ecoule* (best translated as Listen Tight) will delight, surprise, and impress, and for the Quebecois folk-song addict, these gems, mined from deep within the archival crust, will be new discoveries.

—By Mary Beth Carty

Rae Spoon and Rodney DeCoo

Trucker's Memorial
Northern Electric

Girl-boy country duet albums are things of beauty and this is no exception. With four DeCoo-penned songs, five Spoon originals, and a long version of *In the Pines*, *Trucker's Memorial* is a lovely disc to throw on and spend a hungover afternoon baking gooseberry muffins. It's reminiscent of George Jones and Tammy Wynette, largely because Spoon and DeCoo's voices are just as strong and undeniably unique. And even without the romantic involvement that Jones and Wynette could draw from, they still manage to create relationship intrigue (particularly in *Brandon*) through lyrical storytelling and vocal emo-

tion. Rae, especially, went to town on possible characters they could become; she even lets Rodney sing her song *Sweet Mr. Daniels*.

Hamonies are absolutely dead-on awesome and songs stand really well beside one another. Stellar.

—By Mary Beth Carty

Greg Brown

The Evening Call
Red House Records

In the liner notes to his latest disc, veteran Iowa performer Greg Brown talks about building a fire, staring into it, and being with someone in stories and songs. That's what this disc is like. Brown's deep, bass rumble of a voice lays poetry over the interwoven guitars of Bo Ramsey and himself. Bass, drums, and piano fade in and out, but the core is that voice and those shimmering, hypnotic campfire lyrics over the interlocked guitars. Dreamlike, flickering like that fire, *The Evening Call*, seems to stay up late, drinking, hanging on the edge of sleep, or trance, and spinning tales, preaching sermons, telling well-worn yarns that have been told

many times before, from one old friend to another, murmuring like distant water through trees, until we're satisfied, comfortable, drowsy, and ready to hit the sack after a long day and a nice, pleasant evening.

—By Barry Hammond.

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings

Let's Frolic
True North Records

After taking three years off to release solo recordings and lay low after being discovered on George Bush's iPod, Stephen Fearing, Colin Linden and Tom Wilson are back again with Blackie and the Rodeo Kings Volume III — *Let's Frolic*.

And frolicking is exactly what they seem to be doing. Featuring guests Garth Hudson, Pam Tillis, Daniel Lanois, the boys have put together a lovely assortment of tunes to please anyone's palette.

They rock, they cry, and mostly they just make damn good music. As good as they are individually, it seems the whole comes together as greater than sum than its parts.



Particularly wonderful are Fearing and Pam Tillis blending their voices like angels while singing about Saskatchewan on *The Fools That Can't Forget*, a stellar tune penned by Daniel Lanois called *House of Soul*, and a jazzy Tom Waitish-like tune with great horn line called *I Give It Up Everyday*.

Blackie and the Rodeo Kings are back, and yes, they're still royalty.

—By les siemieniuk

Prairie Oyster

One Kiss
Open Road Recordings

For their eighth recording, and first release since their greatest hits package in 2000, the classic Canadian band produced themselves and maintained a leisurely schedule, recording at guitarist Keith Glass's studio, Audio Valley, in Perth, Ontario. The wait has been worth it. This disc covers a wide range, refusing to be pigeon-holed (like the band itself). There's western swing, rock and roll, blues, Tex-Mex, gospel and a southern-tinged horn section, provided by Frank Barth and Chris Whiteley,

which livens up and deepens numbers like Bob Dylan's *I Threw It All Away* and the Ray Evans-Jay Livingston classic, *Mona Lisa*.

Swinging, honky-tonk piano player Joan Besen pens three originals, most notably *Short Time Here*. *One Kiss* is as comfortable as an old flannel shirt. These are musicians who know each other well, settle into deep grooves and shuffles, and deliver top musical goods track after track.

—By Barry Hammond.

Béla Fleck & The Flecktones

The Hidden Land
Columbia

These four musicians can play. Together they are creating a new sound that pushes the confines of music categorization. Each individual musician stands out as a leader on their respective instruments and together their ensemble playing moves effortlessly between songs and styles. The group moves from classical pieces to funk driven riffs effortlessly, each instrumentalist having an opportunity to be featured as a soloist. The Flecktones sound like no other group

and have created an army of devoted fans. *The Hidden Land* will not disappoint.

—By Barry Hammond

Jim Moray

Jim Moray
Niblick-is-a-Giraffe Records

There's one hell of a buzz surrounding Jim Moray in the UK. He plays, arranges and produces everything himself. He blends traditional folk songs with what has been described as 'startlingly contemporary' instrumentation. He is causing a rift between those who see him as the most exciting and innovative performer to come along in eons, and those who are upset by his blending of pop-music sensibilities with this venerable material. Will he live up to his billing as the Great New Hope of English folk music? Well, he has the voice to do it. He uses all the instruments at his disposal to good effect. His arrangements are fresh and challenging. One quote sums it up for me. "All he does is apply modern recording techniques and a lively mind to folk songs. It works". Well worth checking out.

—By Tim Readman



Greg Brown

Amparanoia

La Vida Te Da Wrasse

Popularly identified with the 'mestizo' style exemplified by Manu Chao, Spain's Amparanoia likewise draw from many musical traditions: Son from Cuba, Columbian rhythms and a big dose of Jamaican ska and reggae, but retain elements distinctly rooted in the Iberian peninsula. With a reputation for an energetic live performance, I was a touch surprised by how safe things were on the front nine. Turns out all the action is in the four bonus tracks: all the fun (*Permites Madrecita*), risk (*Jungle 3*) and folly (a totally misguided cover of Bob Marley's *Redemption Song*) appear in the last 20 minutes. After four spins I'm still not 100 percent sold on the music. Nevertheless, three shame-

lessly subjective facts regarding leader Amparo Sanchez compel me to recommend this CD. 1) she is from Granada; 2) she cites Lhasa and Joey Burns (Calexico) as inspiration; 3) she performed live well into the eighth month of her latest pregnancy. Nothing delusional about those choices.

— By Gallagher Parkinson

Cheikha Rimitti

N'da Goudami

Because

Cheikha Rimitti is considered the first lady of Rai, the "Cheikha" a title referring to a female singer. Rai, the North African folk music, has evolved greatly over the years, incorporating rhythms from Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. Cheikha, unabashedly progressive, has pushed the evolution even more, taking a lot of the trance beats out in favour of

a less complex, easier to listen to sound. Personally, the track that is the most trance-like, *Jani El-Hab*, is by far my favourite. The void elsewhere has been filled largely by cheesy Euro-pop and vocoder theatrics. Vocoder or no, however, there is little diminishment of her legendary voice. Even though she was in her eighties when this was recorded, she wrote and performed all the songs within, the trademark raspy vocals still filled with power. Still, this is a flawed work, often sounding repetitive and uninspired. Tragically, Cheikha passed away in May of the year, leaving this as her final recording.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Druha Trava

Good Morning Friends

Compass

This is a collection of American folk, country and

pop tunes bluegrassd by an acoustic band from the Czech Republic. *Bad Moon Rising* done bluegrass is kind of a neat idea and a lot of the ideas on this CD are interesting, but musically it's real cheese and it sounds that way to my ears. The players are quite competent and for the most part so is the recording. It's not fair to compare, but there has been a number of Czech bluegrass players like Slavik Hanslik that have hit the North American scene over the last 20 years and cheese has never before been an issue with me. I couldn't wait for this CD to finish.

— By Mitch Podolak

Saborit

Que Linda es mi Cuba - Tumi Music

Saborit performs straightforward roots music from the canefields of eastern Cuba,

the cradle of son. Since its origins in the early '80s the band has become a regular fixture at parties and fiestas around its hometown of Manzanillo, but *Que Linda Es Mi Cuba* is its first recording. The album takes its name from the most famous song of Edouardo Saborit [1911-1963], the king of musica campesina, or Cuban country music. He's clearly the main inspiration and influence on the octet, whose time-warp feel will appeal to *Buena Vista Social Club* fans.

Half of the tracks are either old-style son or son montuno, but there's a variety of rhythms from the island—among them a fine conga *La Música de Mi País* with almost a Trinidadian carnival swing to it, and a pilon *El Platanar de Bartolo* driven at a brisk pace by percussion and tres. Saborit exudes the

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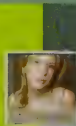
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"Accompanied by an informative DVD, *Inné Amárach* is a snapshot of a band who revel in the unpredictable forces of the tradition, adding their own tincture of personality for deliciously good measure."

— *SCOTTISH FOLK THE IRISH JOURNAL*

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Dónal Clancy - CLOSE TO HOME

Carrying the legacy of the Clancy family name into the 21st century, Dónal Clancy (founding member of the Irish supergroup *Danú*) has established himself at the forefront of a new generation of traditional Irish musicians.

"...the hottest new guitarist in the Celtic realm."

— *SCOTT FLEMING DUBLIN GLOBE*



Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh - DAYBREAK: FÁINNE AN LAE

"As lead vocalist and flute player with *Danú*, Muireann Nic Amhlaoibh brought a west Kerry repertoire and an ear for a good lyric to an ensemble already well versed in the intricacies of a good session. *Daybreak: Fáinne An Lae*, Nic Amhlaoibh's solo debut, is shot through with an unforced fluency and, surprisingly, a remarkable gravitas...a languid treasure."



SCOTT EARLE

DUBLIN GLOBE

confidence of an outfit that's been working closely together for decades. No one's trying to show off, the arrangements are tight, though with room to move and have fun, and the rough edge and wandering pitch on some of the vocals only adds to the sense of authenticity. *Que Linda Es Mi Cuba* is a great album for dancing, or just for swaying to gently like palm-leaves in a breeze off Guantanamo Bay, mojito in hand.

—By Tony Montague

Enoch Kent

I'm A Rover
Independent

Enoch Kent's unique knowledge and performance of songs that capture the workingman's life make him an invaluable source of good music and great entertainment. *I'm a Rover*, his fourth recording since 2002, (after a 36 year recording hiatus) is a wonderful collection of songs that Kent says fall into two categories; Songs that we can join him in singing and songs that still teach us. And he is right. This CD is a well arranged and beautifully performed mix of traditional pieces and covers that capture the listener's ear and masterfully relate a range of

emotions. Kent has even added new lyrics to songs such as *I Didn't Raise My Son To Be A Soldier* a song that dates back to the Boer war that Kent modernizes into a poignant and current peace song.

—By Dan Campbell

James Hill

A Flying Leap
Borealis Records

A Flying Leap, James Hill's fourth recording raises the bar for ukulele playing standards. Hill is a master player and this CD is a must have for ukulele novices and aficionados both. It features six of Hill's original numbers including *One Small Suite for Ukulele* a beautiful three-part suite that showcases Hill's amazing technical ability on the instrument as well as a finely written accompaniment for cello. Hill also accompanies himself on bass on a number of tracks but this is not where his strength lies, any Jimi Hendrix lovers out there will be sadly disappointed with his dull version of the classic *Little Wing*. Still, all in all a great example of just what can be done with a Ukulele, sure to impress.

—By Barry Hammond



Old Crow Medicine Show

Big Iron World
Netwerk

In the realm of young roots musicians who play with punk intensity while reaching back into the earliest days of recorded music for their inspiration, Old Crow Medicine Show continue in the front rank. This is their second studio album produced by Dave Rawlings, musical partner to Gillian Welch. Rawlings gets more involved in the songwriting on this disc, co-authoring five tracks with OCMS's writers Ketch Secor, Critter Fuqua, and Willie Watson. Other tracks are from traditional sources, Woody Guthrie, and they even throw in the Jerry Leiber-Artie Butler classic *Down Home Girl*. (It's also featured as a video on their website, where some senile old gentleman makes the unlikely mistake of thinking they're the Sex Pistols!). These guys are terrific. Don't take my word, buy it and hear for yourself.

—By Barry Hammond.

K'eb Mo

Suitcase
(Epic/Sony/BMG)

K'eb Mo began his career as a bona fide country blues artist but he has piqued the popular ear of late and his focus has changed (or been changed) to one bordering on blues-informed pop, practically skirting MOR. Not that he hasn't paid his dues and refined his craft. *Suitcase* is slick and sultry, bordering on being over-produced and somewhat saccharine-sweet. That being said, songs like *I'm A Hero* are beyond beautiful, classic songwriting that is superbly performed, thanks in part to a studio cast of folks like Jon Cleary, Greg Leitz and Steve Ferrone. The title track remains loyal to his blues roots, accented by Paul Oscher's fantastic harp contributions and Moore's always-convincing National Resonator guitar. His solo, acoustic turn on *I'll Be Your Water* is, likewise, a slight return to form. Yet even this simple, soulful tune propels him into new turf. The delectably-arranged *Rita* is another

timeless tune, loaded with hooks and layered with horns, pedal steel and groove enough to move a mountain. Regardless of whether K'eb Mo is bluesman or otherwise, he's a supremely gifted artist and 'change' has always been part of his signature. There's no denying the sincerity found in the warm glow of his exceptional voice and in his infectiously-joyful approach to making music always leaves us tapping a foot and whistling along – and who can get enough of that?

—By Eric Thom

Sam Bush

Laps In Seven
Sugar Hill Records

Since his early days with New Grass Revival, Sam Bush's mandolin playing has been rooted in traditional bluegrass, while taking it in bold new directions. He continues those explorations on this latest disc. Starting with a Charlie Monroe tune (written by Fred Rose), he's soon playing numbers by artists as varied as Julie Miller, John Hartford, Jeff Black, Leon Russell, Robbie Fulks, and



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Jean Luc Ponty, as well as his own compositions. You can call it New Grass, since it has bass and drums, but it's just great music with his masterful mandolin picking front and centre, backed by top players. Emmylou Harris, Buddy Miller, Shaun Murphy and Jean Luc Ponty (among others) all make contributions. Bush is also becoming a pretty decent vocalist. This is a really enjoyable disc!

— By Barry Hammond.

Linda Ronstadt and Anne Savoy

Adieu False Heart
Vanguard Records

One of things that makes "folk" music so interesting is the singer songwriters who continue to write fabulous songs to keep the genre vital and alive. One of the things that is least interesting in "folk" music is the amount of singer-songwriters that write crappy songs and include them on their albums, because for some strange reason, they feel they will be less of an artist if they cover someone else's really good songs.

So thanks heavens for the interpreters — the Linda Ronstadts of the world, who have a great ear for a good song and give us their best crack at them. On *Adieu False Heart* Ronstadt continues her partnership with Anne Savoy (from the Savoy-Doucette Cajun Band) that they started a couple of years ago with the wonderful release *Evangeline Made*.

This collection of songs is stellar. The Left Banke's *Walk Away Renee* soars. Linda's heartfelt performance on Julie Miller's *I Can't Get Over You* is as good as anything she has ever done. And two of Richard

Thompson's songs, *King of Bohemia* and *Burn's Supper*, are both achingly beautiful, as each woman takes the lead. Their voices are superb together.

In addition, Ronstadt and Savoy with producer Steve Buckingham have assembled a stellar back-up band featuring Sam Bush, guitarist Sam Broussard, Joel Savoy, the emotional violin of Andrea Zonn and Dirk Powell. *Adieu False Heart* is a bittersweet, fantastic piece of work.

— By les siemieniuk

Dustin Bentall

Streets With No Lights
Independent

Dustin Bentall, son of Barney, lays down some rails here with his alt.country debut. The title track is a choice song with engaging lyrics, great mouth harp, and fine background vocals that accompany young Bentall's gravely down-to-earth sound. Most of the songs are original except for an interesting rendition of Stephen Stills' *Helplessly Hoping*. A fine first disc, this

— By John Roman

Fig for a Kiss

Fallen Leaf
Independent

Toronto-based Fig for a Kiss are: Sahara Featherstone: fiddle, harp, vocals, tin whistle. Duncan Cameron: guitar, Irish bouzouki, vocals, fiddle, tin whistles, bodhran and Joe Phillips: double bass, guitar. You may have come across Duncan and Joe during their stint in the Pierre Schryer Band. All three are accomplished musicians who seek to blend Celtic flavoured rhythms and melodies with many other musical influences and styles. The main elements, aside from tradi-



The Duhks

Migrations
Sugar Hill

The Duhks' self-titled debut disc for Sugar Hill earned a Juno this past spring for Roots and Traditional Album of the Year (Group). As good as that recording surely was, there always lingered a sense that this Winnipeg-based quintet could do better. Perhaps it was the dodgy cover of Leonard Cohen's *Everybody Knows* or the uncharacteristically cheesy *You And I*, with guest vocalist Paul Brady on vocals. There were fingers discretely pointed at producer Bela Fleck's insistence to use material the band considered inadequate. Whatever, mandolin virtuoso Tim O'Brien replaces Fleck in the control booth and The Duhks have come up with a recording far more representative of their considerable collective talents.

For starters, vocalist Jessica Havey has written her first song — the truly gorgeous and uplifting *Out of the Rain*. But it's the numerous barnstorming instrumentals with delightful, complex arrangements that really allow The Duhks to take flight on *Migrations*. They have their feet in so many camps and yet they effortlessly amalgamate Cajun with Celtic on the brilliant *Down To The River*. Indeed, claw-hammer banjo plucker Leonard

Podolak's Irish influences come more and more to the fore on such frenzied sets as *Domino Party*. Not to be outdone, guitarist Jordan McConnell has developed into a significant uilleann piper, making startling contributions to the frothy Breton tune, *Ridée*. Truly, there's such a maelstrom of ideas here you'll find yourself on your feet applauding their audacity and vision.

By and large, The Duhks are interpreters of songs. And this time around, they've chosen more astutely. Although it should be said, the flighty swing jazz of the opening *Ol' Cook Pot* seriously undermines the grim nature of the subject matter, poverty. Still, Garnet Rogers's *Three Fishers* offers an abundance of light and shade. And from the Georgia Sea Islands, they've taken the traditional *Moses. Don't Get Lost* and *Turtle Dove*. Both highlight what a special singer they have in Jessica Havey. But the emotional wallop on this record comes from a cover of Dan Frechette's powerfully affecting polemic, *Who Will Take My Place?* Surely it will be sung a hundred years from now. Such an ambitious song selection, combined with impressive instrumental guile, makes *Migration* a truly rewarding recording.

— By Roddy Campbell

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Sept 30th	Gallagher Centre	Yorkton, SK
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Oct 2nd	Jackdaw's Pub	Calgary, AB
Oct 3rd	Tongue N Groove	Lethbridge, AB
Oct 4th	Martini's on Martin	Penticton, BC
Oct 5th	Lorenzo's Cafe	Enderby, BC
Oct 6th	Art Gallery	Grand Forks, BC
Oct 7th	Auditorium Hotel	Nanton, AB
Oct 11th	Lop Lops	Sault Ste Marie, ON
Oct 12th	100 Georges	North Bay, ON
Oct 13th	OCFF Conference	Ottawa, ON
Oct 14th	Le Zariot	Ste Hyacinthe, PQ
Oct 17th	Molly's Coffee House	Fredericton, NB
Oct 19th	Crickets Harp	Liverpool, NS
Oct 20th	Trellis Cafe	Hubbards, NS
Oct 21st	Evergreen Theatre	Margaretsville, NS
Oct 22nd	Sessions Cafe	Rothsay, NB
Oct 25th	Montreal House	Peterborough, ON
Oct 26th	London Music Club	London, ON
Oct 28th	The Glass Onion	Wallaceburg, ON
Oct 29th	House Concert	Kincardine, ON
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tional and contemporary Irish and Scottish music, seem to be derived from classical, jazz and rock music. Duncan Cameron provides the original material (including a couple of co-writes) and the rest is traditional. Overall the tone of the recording is very polite and civilized. There's no rough edges here. Everything is neatly arranged and expertly played. The singing is similarly melodic and sweet, if somewhat restrained. Overall this should do well for them. As for me I'd prefer something a wee bit more gritty.

—By Tim Readman

John McSherry & Donal O'Connor

Tripswitch
Compass

God, this is glorious music! From the insistent guitar THRUMMM of the opening march to the hushed religiosity of the closing hidden track, there is nothing not to love about *Tripswitch*. In a world awash with Celtic everything (Celtic sham-poo and conditioner any-

one?). it's nice to hear the real deal once in a while. And John McSherry (flute and uilleann pipes) and Donal O'Connor (fiddle and keyboard) are the very real deal. At times you'll think you're listening to Lunasa, but this duo lacks the sonic density of that group and there's also a sense of excitement about their music that I haven't felt from Lunasa for quite some time. Just listen to the relaxed swing of the title track which is perfection itself or take flight to the stunning *Johnny Going to Céilí*, where the pipes and fiddle are completely seamless. Hats off also to the accompanists who are integral to *Tripswitch's* sound and who are given plenty of room to add their own stamp—such as on the Austrian jig, *Muñeira d'Antón*, where guitarists Rubén Bada and Paul McSherry take a full two minutes to establish the tune before they're joined by flute and fiddle. Wonderful! Numerous reviewers have already proclaimed this as one of the best Irish records of the year. I can't help but agree.

—By Richard Thornley



John McSherry & Donal O'Connor

The Marigolds

The Marigolds
Independent

Gwen Swick, Caitlin Hanford, and Suzie Vinnick have pooled their considerable individual talents to form a group that is pretty well impossible not to love. Three terrific voices singing individually and in harmony on great songs written by themselves and others? What's not to like? Swick and Hanford are already in the female vocal group, Quartet, but luckily that hasn't stopped them from forming another partnership with Vinnick, who also has ongoing projects with Betty & The Bobs and the pop trio Vinnick Sheppard Harte. Sensitive backed by the tasteful percussion of Randall Coryell and with a little help from Chris Whiteley on various instruments, the three women really come into their own both as guitarists and vocalists on this disc. Picking a single

favourite just isn't possible. Lovely, lovely sounds!

—By Barry Hammond

Ramblin' Jack Elliott

I Stand Alone
Epitaph

Ramblin' Jack Elliott brings a life of singing old American folksongs perfectly together in this extraordinarily well-crafted collection. Here are old songs being sung by an old guy with straightforwardness, confidence and maturity and with a gentleness that illustrates Elliott's love of this music. It's the simplicity in delivery that appeals to me. It's a folk CD that could have been made in your living room just as easily as in a studio. There are heroes, and cowboys, and dogs, and trains, and life, and wandering, and death, and Woody, all in 16 songs. What could be better for anybody that loves folk music to hear this seminal

collection from Jack Elliott the great American balladeer.

—By Mitch Podolak

Lynne Hanson

Things I Miss
Independent

River By My Side, from this disc, won the Blues Award for the Ontario Council Of Folk Festivals 2006 "Songs From The Heart" contest. Not a bad debut for the Ottawa singer-songwriter. It's deserved, too. Hanson has a country-ish-bluesy, warmth and personality to her voice and this disc is recorded simply and cleanly, to showcase that quality. Lynn Miles's background vocals add to that warmth and Paul Bourdeau and Fred Guignon provide some tasty guitar licks. Other tracks well worth checking out are *Pushed To The Black, Different Story* and the title track. -

—By Barry Hammond.



Lynne Hanson

Albert Kuvezin & Yat-Kha

Re-Covers
World Village

When I got my copy of *Re-Covers* and looked at the titles of the tracks I was flummoxed. Why would Central Asian overtone-singer Albert Kuvezin – whose ultra-low voice sounds like the rumbling of a concrete-mixer – want to reinterpret such pieces as Santana's *Black Magic Woman*, Bob Marley's *Exodus*, and Hank Williams' *Ramblin' Man*? After a couple of cuts it becomes clear that the Tuvan artist and his trio Yat-Kha are paying musical dues to their early western pop and rock inspirations, while at the same time having a cross-cultural lark.

Kuvezin's droning, growling versions of the Jagger-Richard ballad *Play With Fire* and late '60s West

Coast band Iron Butterfly's embarrassingly vapid dirge *In a Gadda Da Vida* are clearly not to be taken too seriously. And his rendition of the traditional Scottish ditty *The Wild Mountain Thyme* suggests a lovelorn Highland troll bedevilled with indigestion. It does nothing for the song; the joke is on us.

However, the deep pitch of Kuvezin's voice and the mix of electric guitar and bass with instruments from Central Asia works well on several other cuts. Led Zeppelin's bluesy *When the Levee Breaks* and Joy Division's intense *Love Will Tear Us Apart* gain from a sense of ancient darkness and menace. Likewise, Kuvezin and Yat-Kha's mesmeric reworking of Captain Beefheart's *Her Eyes Are A Blue Million Miles* enhances the song's

psychedelic edginess. Except for one number in Russian and another in Tuvan, Kuvezin sings throughout the album in heavily-accented and sometimes strangely-articulated English. *Re-Covers*' oddball blend of world music and pop-rock deserves praise for its adventurous spirit, but the rough charm wears a bit thin after two or three plays.

– By Tony Montague

Peter Nardini

Rain Din Whistleberry

Album number four from this mercurial Scottish artist. No fuss, no nonsense, no big production. Economical, entertaining and intriguing. Cut and dried. Simple but effective. Guitar, vocals and harmonica. A narrative approach to songwriting. A conversational style of singing that is engaging and

intimate. Great stories. Borrows heavily from Dylan, Springsteen, Neil Young and Billy Bragg. Sounds North American but sings with a Lanarkshire accent. Could be the bastard child of The Proclaimers and Mr. Zimmerman except they're all blokes. The title track is killer. There's two bonus tracks. Don't miss them. Go get it.

– By Tim Readman

L'il Ed & The Blues Imperials

Rattleshake Alligator

There's something about the way L'il Ed commands a stage and fills up a room. A fireball of energy, he and his crack band come on like a gale force storm. Ed has to work a little harder on disc, however, where the emphasis moves from filling a

dance-floor to nailing a groove in house. Ed's sixth album gets off to a slow start and seems, at times, more sloppy than studied, given his pedigree for churning out hard-rockin' Chicago blues. Ed's over-the-top vocals and frenetic-paced fretwork work best with good material which is less than abundant here. However, *Golden Rule* begins to turn things around followed by *You Just Weren't There* – when he slows things down – that things really begin to fall into place. Ed's guitar taking over the lion's share of the sound. *Iceles In My Meatloaf* is fun, if not unbelievable – as Ed unleashes both his searing slide together with the most outrageous lyrics in his arsenal. The guitar-propelled *Broken Promises* features his well-heeled rhythm section at full canter while their take on



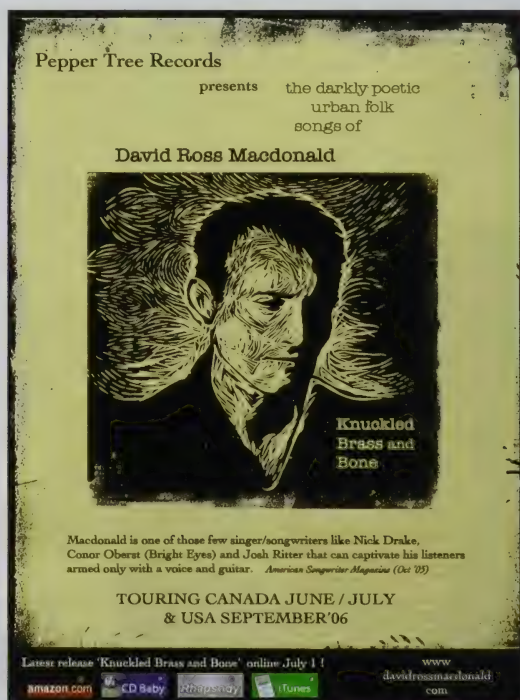
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Knuckled Brass and Bone

Macdonald is one of those few singer/songwriters like Nick Drake, Conor Oberst (Bright Eyes) and Josh Ritter that can captivate his listeners armed only with a voice and guitar. *American Songwriter Magazine* (Oct '05)

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Billy Joe Shaver's *Tramp on the Street* demonstrates the band's ability to slow things down and keep things as convincing as their harder-edged attack. *Nobody's Fault But My Own* is one of the best tracks on this disc with Ed's ferocious lead guitar owning centre stage, bolstered by a band that seems more than able to keep step with Ed's every frenetic move.

— Eric Thom

Mike Katz

A Month of Sundays Temple

A very nice piece of work by Battlefield Band Piper and talented multi-instrumentalist Mike Katz and interesting on several fronts. Many of the tunes are taken from two old collections of light pipe music; MacKay's Piper's Assistant (circa 1843) & Gunn's Collection of Pipe Music (circa 1848). It's kind of like doing a rummage through some old family photographs and finding some real gems. Katz rounds the repertoire off by adding many of his own fine compositions. He aptly explains the background of each tune (old and new) in the sleeve

notes adding to the over all enjoyment of the CD. Musicality, thankfully, is the forte with this recording with credos to all the assembled cast — Kevin Mackenzie on guitar, Alasdair White & John Martin on fiddles and Simon Thoumire on English Concertina. Nowhere does this shine through better than *The Fiddler* by 20th Century composing legend Donald Macleod. Superb stuff! The tracks are varied keeping things fresh throughout with Mike displaying his considerable abilities on Highland Pipes, Scottish Small Pipes, Low Whistles and Bass. Overall, a great CD and highly recommended!

— By Rob Menzies

Jim Cuddy

The Light That Guides You Home
Warner Music

Best known as the front man with Blue Rodeo, Jim Cuddy helped to propel the band to a successful career that has spanned over twenty years. And with some ten album releases, playing their distinctive pop-rock country mix, became one of Canada's most popular tour-

ing bands. In 1999, Cuddy decided to take a short leave from Blue Rodeo and released his second solo album *The Light That Guides You Home*. With this album, Cuddy is well on his way to finding a new home. The well-written and strong arrangements lend to a very good listen. However, he does not deviate too far from his comfort zone of pop-rock country — although maybe more country here than you would find in his Blue Rodeo recordings. That aside, Cuddy appears to be embarking on a journey of self-reflection with a smattering of twang. For Blue Rodeo fans, this album should do the job.

— By Philip Harries

k.d. lang

Reintarnation
Rhino

With *Reintarnation*, k.d. lang, has two-stepped back to her early days to pay homage to her roots. *Reintarnation* is Lang's last stop on "a great ride" on the country truck. This twenty-song collection, spanning over a seven-year period commencing in 1984, cap-

tures her unique voice, her energy and vocal brilliance, that defined her vision of country music. She may never have seen herself as a country singer, but after hearing Patsy Cline, lang changed — her dress, her sound, her understanding of US and Canadian cultures. Even with all her musical changes, this greatest hits, of sorts, is a testament to the fact that she never forgot her early beginnings that dosey-doe her to international fame. Like the last barn dance of the summer.

Reintarnation marks the end to lang's *Torch* and *Twang* years. Lang, of late, has focussed her attention on songs with big arrangements, but *Reintarnation* is superb snap shot of an artist who has left an unmistakable mark on country music.

— By Philip Harries

Tim Hus

Huskies and Husqvarnas
Rocky

Huskies and Husqvarnas, is a gritty, country music travelogue tracing Hus's footsteps across Western Canada. He is the prairie recreation of Stompin' Tom, with a pinch of Dick

Damron, Leroy Van Dyck and Hank Snow thrown in for good measure. Corb Lund lends a hand and is heard on *Hurtin' Albertan*. And in a neighborly fashion, Hus repays the favour on Lund's *Hair in my Eyes like a Highland Steer*.

Huskies and Husqvarnas, sounds great streaming from speakers housed in truck dashboards. It's a rough edged, patriotic salute to working people, composed of prairie anthems that use the jargon and handles of work life. Look for a hidden track telling of his misadventures in Mexico and a thief's error in trying to walk in the boots of Tim Hus.

— By John Roman

Crasdan

Dwndwr — The Great Noise (Sain)

It's possible (if not entirely just) to describe Crasdan as a younger, less musically promiscuous and, most importantly, Welsh version of The Chieftains. Crasdan is Huw Williams (guitar and clogging), Robin Huw Bowen (triple harp), Stephen Rees (accordion, fiddle and whistles), and Andy McLaughlin (flute, whistles and the delightful — in name,



Jim Cuddy

sight and sound – traditional reed pipe the pibgorn). Four of Wales' most accomplished traditional musicians, one might call Crasdan as a 'super-group', if the term wasn't so absurdly hyperbolic for such an understated, almost humble, sounding recording. This is a charming project lovingly infused with a pride in place and culture. Thorough bilingual (Welsh/English) liner notes and an accompanying DVD featuring brief introductions to the instruments and downloadable sheet music and a slightly stiff, but still engaging video performance only add to the appeal. *Dwndwr* proves that – unlike Scrabble – you can score big without any vowels. 4 leeks of a possible 5.

– By Gallagher Parkinson

Valle Son

No Sire Tire Company
Caribou Records

The Yukon Territory's Caribou Records is stretching out! Taking the opportunity to record Cuba's Valle Son while the band was on tour in 2000 is a musical coupe for this small indie label. The staff at Old Crow

Recording Studios in Whitehorse, have masterfully captured the spirit and energy of this energetic & rhythmically intricate group. With strong vocals and smooth alto sax leading the listener through a fine mix of covers and originals by tres player Pedro Hernandez Gonzalez. Fans of the genre should definitely give this one a listen.

– By Dan Campbell

Richard Thompson

1000 Years of Popular Music
True North

This project started as a bit of a lark – a list of the greatest songs of the Millennium for a Playboy poll. Thompson's submission was ignored. Songs from 1205 A.D., that never charted, is not what its editors had in mind, apparently. Still, the evidence here suggests he could easily have been a bal-ladeur in a medieval court or a honky tonk singer in the fifties. The barriers come tumbling down as he covers carols, English traditional melodies, country heart breakers, show tunes to clas-

sic rock, and even a very creditable nod to some pop schmaltz. On top of all that, add an obscure track from Ray Davies, songs covered by pioneering singers like Nat King Cole, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Buck Owens. And he also includes the Squeeze classic *Tempted*, and the Easybeats' *Friday on My Mind*. *Shenandoah*, however, is the showstopper that digs deep into the heart of his interpretive spirit. It all fits. I don't know how; it just does. The DVD, with its seamless camera movements, makes this one of my favourite performance discs. The legacy of Richard Thompson as a great artist continues to flourish. The more I listen, the more I smile and grow in my respect for his artistry. This one's a keeper, to be viewed and listened to time and time again.

– By Tom Coxworth.

Sarah Burnell

Sarah'ndipity
Sarahfiddle Music

This effervescent young Ottawa Valley fiddler has a good feel for Scottish, Irish, and particularly Cape Breton



music. Her maiden CD offers ten tracks of tunes and a further two on which she also sings. She wields a mighty bow, and manages a fine touch on what is largely a traditional repertoire of very well known pieces. Also a dancer, clearly her lively music is intended to get people up out of their chairs and onto the floor. Vocally she handles the two songs very nicely, although her version of *Siuil A Ruin* seems a bit pacy considering the intrinsic sense of regret in the lyrics. Ms Burnell has clearly learned her lessons well though, and makes a solid debut with this release.

– By David Ingram

The Doug & Jess Band

Slave To This World
Independent

Winnipeg based The Doug & Jess Band, a fine Bluegrass-Old-time style quartet, have produced a solid collection of well written

original songs. One could easily mistake some of these as traditional, while many of the more gospel-type songs will pull at the heartstrings of devout listeners. Although the writing is very strong, some of the vocal and instrumental performances are not. They sometimes sound clichéd, forced and affected. Perhaps this is in the hopes to authenticate or to convince the listener of the validity of the recording, but it is not needed. The writing stands up on its own.

– By Dan Campbell

Greg Graffin

Cold As The Clay
Anti- Inc.

Bad Religion vocalist, Greg Graffin, backed by the likes of the Weakerthans has recorded a disc of old-timey, folksy Americana tunes. The disc is split between an acoustic rock feel. Some songs are new and penned by Graffin and some are traditional. The playing is decent throughout and, if you're a Bad Religion fan,



penguin eggs 56

Richard Thompson

it's nice to see Graffin stretching out in some other directions. For my money, though, the vocals are a little thin and flat. These kind of songs depend on deep emotion and feeling and Graffin just doesn't deliver. While he sounds like he's enjoying himself, he's not digging in and mining the depths that could be there. OK but not a standout.

- By Barry Hammond.

Rita Chiarelli

Cuore: The Italian Sessions

Mad Iris Records

Here's one for the books: Rita Chiarelli has set aside the blues for traditional Italian folk songs. With a name like Chiarelli, it's obviously in the blood. And this extremely talented woman puts her own wonderful twist on these largely immortal, romantic Italian songs. She sings in both the Roman and Neapolitan dialects and does it so well for a kid raised in Canada, it's uncanny. Because of her extensive knowledge of the language, she sounds like a true Italian unlike Tony Bennett and his ilk. Her voice is raspy as well as gentle and soft and is enhanced by an unobtrusive classical

guitar or mandolin.

My mom used to sing these songs to us when we were little. *Mulafemmina* (*Bad Woman*) is an obvious highlight. "You are a bad woman because you hurt my heart." It's the most romantic of songs and based on a true story. Chiarelli's rendition is outstanding and brings tears to my eyes. This is one fantastic album.

- By Josephine Valente

Kasir

Reel Irish
Go Danish!

A trio of young Danish musicians playing a mix of traditional Irish tunes and originals written in the Celtic style and calling the disc Reel Irish. Well it's not real Irish and it's not even real interesting. Although clearly able players this disc lacks any of the swing, originality and drive that many other young groups are putting out. It sounds stiff, studied and forced. The band bio included as part of the liner notes lists the young men's ages and where they went to school, but why? A bit of soul searching and more playing together might lead this young trio to find it's identity and perhaps that's when they'll start putting out



Rita Chiarelli

some really exciting and original music.

- By Dan Campbell

Walter Trout And Friends

Full Circle
Ruf

Blues guitarist, Walter Trout, long held a dream to pull his musical friends; John Mayall, Coco Montoya and Jeff Healey into the studio. Well he pulled it off and Full Circle is a glistering example of how collaboration between musical friends can be fruitful. This album offers great new songs and some reworked gems like Luther Allison's, *When Will It All End*. This, the first studio album in five years for the former Canned Heat and Blues Breaker's, should gain immediate entry into most modern electric blues libraries.

- By John Roman

Salsa Celtica

El Camino
Discos Leon

El Camino the fourth CD by Scottish group Salsa Celtica is a lively habanero hot horn and percussion

driven musical experience. Although the marriage of Celtic and Salsa is not always obvious, and the Salsa end of things tends to dominate, this disc is an entertaining and adventurous listen that is sure to get your toes tapping if it doesn't drive you right up out of your seat, shakin' it all over. Fun, lively and energetic Salsa Celtica explore a unique marriage of musical cultures.

- By Dan Campbell

The Audreys

Between Last Night
and Us
True North Records

Let's cut right to the chase: this is as fine debut album as I've ever heard. From Australia, The Audreys, deliver a sublime collection of alt-countryish, bluegrass, folksy songs that are fresh and new, yet manage to sound timeless.

The sparse, melancholy arrangements of the Audreys feature a wonderful marriage of banjo, ukulele, guitar and violin, but it is all cemented wonderfully in place by the gorgeous, amazingly smoky and intense voice of Taasha Coates. It cuts straight to

your heart. *Banjo and Violin* is a hauntingly performed standout, as is a beautiful cover of INXS's *Don't Change*.

The Audreys are reminiscent of Po Girl, Nathan, the Wailin' Jennys yet sound unique and fresh. If their live show is anywhere near the performances on this record look out, they've got it all. A gorgeous CD, run out and buy it.

- By les siemieniuk

Battlefield Band

The Road of Tears
Temple Records

Perhaps the only surprises in this latest release from Battlefield Band are how good and provocative they remain after so many years. *The Road of Tears* is an emigration-themed collection that sounds like it was recorded by a band twenty years their junior. The tunes have a fire raging in the belly and if the songs tend a bit towards the sad and sentimental, I suppose that's part and parcel of the theme: emigration is often an emotional landscape of separation, loss, and alienation. So we are reduced to tears before



Walter Trout

even the first chorus of the title track, a powerful Alan Reid statement about the displacements of the Scottish Highlanders, Irish (during the time of the Irish Famine), and American Indians. Then there's the "nameless" Mexican farm workers deported in *Plane Wreck At Los Gatos* (just as maddeningly relevant today as when Woody Guthrie wrote it in 1948). And the album closes with a live performance of another hard-hitting Reid original, *The Green and the Blue* that surely is as classic as anything Battlefield Band has ever done. Fortunately the tunes are the much-needed counterweight to the lyrical heaviness, and there's some great sets of both original and traditional material. As the bands web site says, "Forward with the past!"

— By Richard Thornley

Leslie Alexander Garden In The Stones Superoops Records

Leslie Alexander's life has been an adventure and a journey. She grew up on a sheep farm in Alberta then moved to Vancouver's downtown east side. Along the way, she recorded two previous albums (*Bird In The House* and *Savage Country*) and made some friends, like producer John M. Ellis (*The Be Good Tanyas*), Harry Manx (who played on her second disc), Sam Parton of The Be Good Tanyas (also on the second), and Wyckham Porteous and Jane Siberry, who both play on this new disc. It's easy to see why she attracts people of that calibre. She has a voice that can range from gentle and pretty to big-ball-sy-bluesy and she writes damn good songs like *Tulips In A Vase*, *Slow Down*,

Shady Lake and Creepy Underbelly. With a voice and material like this, her journey is likely to be a long and prosperous one.

— By Barry Hammond.

Femi Abosede No Compromise Independent

Femi Abosede, as a young man growing up in Nigeria, spent much of his teenage years at Fela Kuti's compound. Even though Fela passed away in 1997, and Femi left Nigeria to eventually reside in Toronto, that original Afrobeat sound is a huge influence. Indeed, he is considered to be playing one of the purest forms of the moment. With lyrics still raging against the Nigerian government, and a band of no less than 22 people, it would be easy to just ape the legend and still sound pretty good. But he does manage to

own spin on the classic Afrobeat sound, sounding less frenetic, allowing a purer African-jazz hybrid to shine through. This is a great debut; all fans of the genre should check it out.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Fiona Boyes & The Fortune Tellers

Lucky 13
Yellow Dog

Blues legend Pinetop Perkins calls Australian Fiona Boyes, "the best gal guitar player I've heard since Memphis Minnie." With a style borrowed from the likes of Memphis Millie, Etta Baker and Marcia Ball, Boyes is cutting her own identity in the acoustic blues world. Songs to look for are *Stranger in Your Eyes*, which showcases her fine vocal range. Electric guitar

fans will find some great work on *Chicken Wants Corn*. Acoustic aficionados have more to choose from and will enjoy *Lucky 13* from start to finish. Boyes has landed on her feet and *Lucky 13* it may well be.

— By John Roman

Pedro Luis Ferrer Natural Escondido

You would be forgiven for thinking that all music coming out of Cuba is son, as that's almost all that's been available here for the last few years. However, as with most countries, music varies with geography. Pedro Luis Ferrer has invented a new form of Cuban music he has dubbed "chenguista", loosely based on changui from East Cuba. Anchored by the tres guitar and lifted by rich vocal harmonies, it's quite different from son's party mu-

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Sat/Oct 21 - Roy Forbes (Some Tunes For That Mother Of Mine)
Sat/Nov 11 - Finest Kind
Sun/Nov 12 - Homefest 2006
Sat/Dec 2 - 'Come on in my Kitchen' (Christmas Show)
Sat/Jan 13 - Ann Vriend & Rachelle van Zanten
Thurs/Feb 8 - David Francey (ARDEN)
Fri/Mar 2 - Martyn Joseph
Sat/March 10 - The Polyjesters
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sic. Instead, its simple melodies and spare guitar-and-bongo beat echo, well, folk. Pedro's deep vocals accent his thought-provoking lyrics, which range from the political (*Repetition*) to the absurd (*Pelito de mi Bigote* or *That little hair in my Moustache*). It is songs like the former that have him banned in his country's state-run media and forced him underground. Fortunately, he is able to record at home and release his music here, complete with lyric translations. A lovely, serene addition to your Latin music collection.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Bill Gallagher and Jake Galbraith Outlaws & Heroes Independent

This is a lovely collection of previously released CDs from Gallagher and Galbraith. Based in British Columbia, you can feel the sense and love of place in their work. *Outlaws and Heroes* features twelve songs, most chronicling BC history. From the wild McLean boys' tragic story, through the train robbing of Bill Miner, to the mysterious death of one of BC's first union organizers, Ginger Goodwin, this is folk music

at its grass roots best. Gallagher and Galbraith are doing the canon of Canadian historical songs a very good turn indeed.

— By les siemienuk

Jim Byrnes House of Refuge Black Hen Music

Better known for his face and his various movie and television roles, Jim is first and foremost, a musician. It's in his blood, never better encapsulated than by this exceptional release — easily the best of his career. The St. Louis-born Byrnes drank in the club circuit and musical culture of that city's north side, coming by his influences honestly as he taught himself piano and guitar. He's been a musical fixture in and around Vancouver since moving there in the mid-'70s. Teamed with Western wunderkinds, Steve Dawson (who produces) and Jesse Zubot, Byrnes kicks things off with the soulful strains of The Sojourners for some a capella gospel before launching into something born of gospel but supercharged and propelled further by the natural chemistry formed when Byrnes, Dawson and Zubot interact. His world-weary vocals dig deep as Dawson's multi-

stringed barrage bobs and weaves around Zubot's fiddle and mandolin, while the Sojourners provide heavenly harmonies. Stand-out tracks are many: from the delightful *Didn't It Rain* to Byrnes' own *Of Whom Shall I Be Afraid?* — an impassioned powerplay, inspired by *Psalms* 27. Byrnes' throaty rasp again hits its mark with *Running Out of Time* but not before updating Hoagy Carmichael's *Stardust* with a laidback ukulele-cum-dobro treatment that sits as naturally as if it was Byrnes' own composition. I feel better just thinking about this disc — it's that powerful.

— By Eric Thom

Popa Chubby Stealing the Devil's Guitar Blind Pig

Popa Chubby's gangster raplike, *Slide Devil Man Slide*, *Smugglers Game*, and *Preacher Man* reflect a darker and more sinister side of life and effectively casts a shroud of intrigue over this album. Jessie Hemphill's, *In this World* and Chubby's, bouncy R&B *Back in Your Arms Again* break that shroud of darkness. His vocals provide a smooth commentary throughout the album and work effectively with the wailing guitar that permeates throughout. The racy and gimmicky *Virgil and Smokey*, which follows two dogs prowling inner city streets in the heat of the night, may entertain some and offend others. Yet this album reaffirms that Chubby is a fine storyteller, and a talented blues guitarist. *Stealing the Devil's Guitar* takes you for a ride through parts of town that you may never have seen or known about.

— By John Roman

Kathryn Tickell & Corrina Hewat

The Sky Didn't Fall
Park Records

Eloquent in its approach, this collaboration between Northumbrian piper-fiddler Kathryn Tickell and Scottish harpist-vocalist Corrina Hewat puts truth to the old adage — "sometimes, less is more". A set of pipes, a fiddle, a harp and both women's voices represent the total compliment of sounds on *The Sky Didn't Fall*. Usually, there are no more than two participating elements at any given moment — voices in duet, pipes and harp, fiddle and harp or instrument and voice. This allows the tonal quality of the instruments and vocals to fully stretch out. But make no mistake, the arrangements are anything but simple. Indeed, both women are

masters of their own craft, resulting in a beautiful intricacy. There is a healthy representation of tunes and songs from both Scotland and Northumberland. The works of Robert Burns is also well represented, always a good thing. The histories of the music are aptly explained in the sleeve notes — a great deal of care has gone into this part — and some beautiful photographs round things off. My favourite tracks include *Big Set*, *Brose* and *The Lads*. The showpiece track combines Corrina's own composition, *My Favorite Place*, with Kathryn narrating her mother's recollections of growing up in rural Northumberland in the 1950s. Wonderful. Let's hope there's much more from these two in the near future.

— By Rob Menzies



Kathryn Tickell
penguin eggs 59

Bill Perry

Don't Know Nothin'
Bout Love
Blind Pig

Perry's guitar work jumps out and his voice is strong and convincing. Popa Chubby once again produces and showcases the ferocious roar that is present in Perry's vocals. This bluesman wears the authoritative hat very well and his voice now carries the same confident swagger that he has always touted with his guitar.

This one-time guitarist with Richie Havens, takes us for a romp through relationships and such topics as Iraq and the flood in New Orleans. He writes songs that don't simply rehash blues clichés, but expound the feelings present in society today. The rich moonlight from the Blues Gods has danced across this album

and christened it worthy of playing over and over.

— By John Roman

Ralph Stanley

A Distant Land To Room: A Carter Family Collection
Columbia

Every time I sit down and listen to a new Ralph Stanley collection of traditional songs I come away with two distinct impressions; the first being that Ralph Stanley is the most consistently right-on musician in American music. He rarely misses what he aims at. This CD is on the money, rich in voice, honest to the origins of the music, well thought out in choice of songs and as beautiful as could be. All of this leads to the second impression, which is: this must be the definitive Ralph Stanley CD just like the last three

Ralph Stanley CD's I listened to. There is no other voice that integrates American folk songs and bluegrass with such a natural ease and presents folk songs with the care and love they deserve. This CD is musically tasteful and includes such luminaries as Mike Seeger on Autoharp and Jack Cooke on vocals performing the most understated but marvelous backup. All in all, *A Distant Land To Room* is a must for your collection. It will be just another great definitive place to reach once in a while that will set ya right.

— By Mitch Podolak

The Jason Sinay Band

The Jason Sinay Band
Tomato

California native and ses-

sion guitar player for the likes of Bonnie Raitt, Neil Diamond, Dr. John, Tift Merritt, and Ivan Neville. Sinay gets to show off his song writing, singing and playing talents on this debut disc. He calls in a few favours and Mike Campbell, Ron Blair and Steve Ferrone (all from Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers), Ivan Neville and the Cracker's Davey Faragher all show up to add expert backing. It's an Americana rock disc with some great playing, tight grooves, and a great sound by engineer, Martin Pradler. Sinay has a delivery a little like Tom Petty (minus the drawl) and, like a recording by Petty, himself, it's a great disc to drive around in a car to. The real deal.

— By Barry Hammond.

Cabrera

Probido Cochilar
Piranha

Probido Cochilar-Sleeping Forbidden. Even songs like the cheekily titled *Lullaby* are seemingly designed to prevent boredom and drowsiness. Although technically all sambas, as all five of the musicians in Cabrera come from rock/funk backgrounds, the sound refuses to be pigeon-holed. Elements of the above are combined with hip-hop, jungle, and jazz, creating a sound that follows in the path of the Mangue beat movement of Northeast Brazil. Add the slightly bizarre "ballpoint guitar", acoustic guitar played with a ballpoint pen as a sort of bow, and you have an interesting, if slightly overcrowded, record. That's irrelevant anyway, as this album was

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not intended to be listened to while sitting, but dancing, and all the songs are designed thusly. From the trance-inducing Carcara, to the accordion-heavy funk of *Xingatorio*, to the drum'n'bass remix of *Magistrado Ladrao*, all songs feature an infectious and driving beat. Seemingly a different one on each song, as virtually every musical style that can be found in Brazil is tossed into the mix. Mostly successfully.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Charlie Sohmer

Dying To Have A Good Time
Independent

Charlie Sohmer's music is quirky, thoughtful, and warm-hearted or, as Charlie's web site puts it, "Honest and touching." In other words, quintessential Canadian folk music (albeit with plenty of country, gospel, Cajun, and bluegrass influences). Sohmer sings and plays banjo and is supported by his Jazzed Up Hoodlums (players from Toronto's The Brothers Cosmoline and The Beboop Cowboys). And while the whole album is rock solid,

personally I'm drawn to the stripped-down, darker pieces, *Take My Possessions* and *Who Do You Think It Was* being two standouts. But there's also the Cajun-flavoured *Cissy Bon*, the nostalgic *Blue Satin* (which to my ear evokes Jimmy Buffet), and country swing on *Lean In A Little Closer*. None of it will rock your world, perhaps, but there's something very appealing and more than a little refreshing about Sohmer's plain spun creations.

— By Richard Thornley

Karen Matheson
Downriver
Compass Records

Karen Matheson, the golden voice behind Capercaille, has released other solo albums but surely none as satisfying as *Downriver*. Inspired by the traditional songs of her youth, the album is confident and comfortable in ways that Matheson's more contemporary outings never are. The album is produced by Donald Shaw and features a cast of well-known players including Shaw, Donal Lunny, James Grant, Michael McGoldrick, Ewen

Vernal, and others. Of course, the focus is on Matheson's singing in Gaelic and English, whether traditional mouth music or originals from long-time collaborator James Grant. It's all pretty serene, but the band does work up a bit of sweat on *O Mhairi's*

tu mo Mhairi and *O nach eisdeadh tu'n sgeul le aire*. And the album closer, *Cruican na Bpaiste* (*Burial place of the Children*), would wring tears from stone. Classic.

— By Richard Thornley

Show of Hands
Witness
Hands on Music

Show of Hands have built a loyal and sizable audience in Europe and yet remain rather anonymous in Canada. Their previous Canadian release, *Anglicana*, (2000) was wonderful but suffered from no touring support. Hopefully, given their reception and sales at the Canmore and Edmonton Folk Music Festivals this summer, this is all about to change.

Steve Knightly, Phil Beers and Miranda Sykes are the real deal and complete folk music package. They write of contemporary England with a critical and detailed eye, interpret the English tradition with energy and zeal, and best of all, they play and sing like gangbusters. *Witness* is a stellar piece of work — not a bum song in the lot with angelic and heroic arrangements — a slice of English life worth experiencing.

Roots laments the English disinterest in their own culture, unlike the Scots and Irish. In it: "A minister said his vision of Hell is three folk singers in a bar in Wells." Well excuse me, sir, not Show of Hands. These peo-



ple provide folk music with respect. Spread the word.

— By les siemieniuk

Swill & The Swaggerband
Elvis Lives Here
Irregular

I put this one on blind while driving back from a recent Thai dinner. Minutes into the first track I started to suspect a dodgy prawn in my Tom Yum Goong, because I swear I was hallucinating a night at The Town Pump, pissed as a newt (as my father would say) on pale ale dancing to The Men They Couldn't Hang (co-incidentally, the same un-hung men immortalized in The Tragically Hip's *Bobcaygeon* — another thinking man's drinking band... or is that drinking man's thinking band?). Safely home, and happily Googling, I find that, yes, indeed, the 'Swill' in question is Phil Odgers of TMTC. Provoking another vertiginous episode as it appears that in the seventeen years elapsed I was totally oblivious to the fact the Phil was still at it! Still writing about drinkers and 'tatty old boozers' and lyrics with a social

bent, like *World of Discontent* and no song without a chorus you can't sing along. Sad part is, despite swapping out Thatcher's Falkland follies for the fallout of Blair's Iraqi misadventure, it sure still sounds like 1989. Reassuring for some, unsettling for others.

— By Gallagher Parkinson

The Queensberry Rules

The Black Dog & Other Stories
Fellside Recordings

The Queensbury Rules blend folk, country, bluegrass and pop. Their vocal harmonies are most definitely a strong point of their act, which has been honed by plenty of gigging around the UK folk scene. They composed almost all of the songs here. The subject matter runs the gamut from local legend to a personal reflection on friendship. Somehow though, it fails to really impress. For all the solid playing and energetic singing there's a spark of originality that's missing. Competent and worthy then, but hardly inspirational.

— By Tim Readman



Damien Dempsey

Shots
Clear Records

Mr. Dempsey is a love him or hate him sort of performer. Plenty must love him as evidenced by his 2003 platinum selling album *Seize the Day*. Some dislike the harsh, angry delivery of his hard hitting socially conscious lyrics. As far as I'm concerned, anyone who comes personally recommended by Christy Moore, Sinéad O'Connor and Shane McGowan has to be worth a listen. My first impression was that he sounded a lot like Mick Hanly. Several tracks in though I realized he didn't have the same variety of pacing and dynamics. And that's where the problem is for me. He always seems to be belting the songs out from the bottom of his guts. After a while I was yearning for a wee bit more

light and shade. This is excellent material, well written and well played.

Unfortunately it's a bit like going down the pub expecting a pint and a wee chat, and ending up drinking a bottle of whiskey and getting a right old earbashing.

— By Tim Readman

Susana Baca

Travesias
Luaka Bop

Susana Baca has been performing for thirty years, but only came to the attention of North America a decade ago with the anthemic *Maria Lando*. She's put out several albums since, each one delving deeper into a more distinctive sound, spurred on by her work running an institute devoted to Afro-Peruvian music, of which she is currently the queen. *Travesias* is her most distinctive to date, and also the best. With one

of the most expressive voices in South America, she doesn't need much accompaniment. With deliciously off-tempo drumming and Kevin Breit's bluesy guitar, she shines. Here is a very restrained, interesting, and beautiful album.

— By Shawna Biamonte

Nudie and the Turks

Nudie and the Turks
Independent

Here's some lovely old-time country music ("neo-honky-tonk") from PEL, suckled from the same teat that sustained Willie, Hank, Elvis, and Buddy. The Turks are Gordie MacKeeman and Dean Dunsford who play fiddle and standup bass, respectively, and contribute some great harmony vocals throughout. Nudie sings, plays guitar, and writes the songs. And what songs!

Fiona is all sad and soulful with a vocal melody that I imagine leading into some impromptu country yodeling in concert. Pawn Shop, like many of their songs, treads a beautifully fine line between humour and pathos. And on *Sleeping Fingers* they get all Johnny Cash on us, with a trace of an Island accent. Great stuff! If you've ever bemoaned the horrible state of what passes for country music these days, throw a few bucks to Nudie and the Turks and get their CD. You won't regret it.

— By Richard Thornley

The Stills

Without Feathers
Vice

The Stills are largely an indie rock band from Montreal who released their debut album *Logic Will Break Your Heart* in 2003. *Without Feathers* is a reasonable fol-


low-up. The album lacks radio commerciality, but tracks worthy of note are *In the Beginning*, *Helicopter* and *It Takes Time*. The Stills show promise lyrically and instrumentally; and all in all, *Without Feathers* is an enjoyable listen.

— By Philip Harries

The Sadies

In Concert Vol. 1
Yep Roc Records

Anyone who wants to understand the tremendous buzz generated by Toronto band, The Sadies, need only buy this double live disc to find out why. The band covers all territory between alt-country, garage-punk, bluegrass, surf-instrumental, and spaghetti-western with a vengeance. The only comparison for the kind of energy and talent they display is to say they're like a modern version of The Band. The



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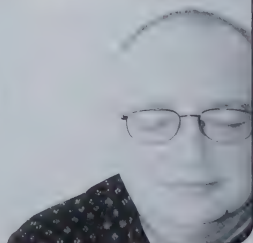
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other great thing about these discs is that they're recorded on their home turf with a cast of their friends and admirers: Bob Egan, Garth Hudson, Kelly Hogan, Neko Case, Gary Louris (from the Jayhawks), the guys from Blue Rodeo, Andre Ethier and many others. Steve Albini recorded it with help from Ken Friesen and Don Pyle (Shadowy Men On A Shadowy Planet). Forty-one smoking tracks of hot shit! Buy! Buy! Buy! A great record of a great band and they're still poised for even more glory because of their soundtrack for *Tales Of The Ratfink*, the new movie about hot-rod culture icon. Ed "Big Daddy" Roth.

— By Barry Hammond.

Eddie Turner

The Turner Diaries
NorthernBlues

Further distancing himself from the shadow of ex-boss, Otis Taylor, Eddie Turner's sophomore album continues down the same road as last year's *Rise*. This disc still focuses on shades of rock and blues. Anyone slugging

Turner for his obvious Hendrix fixation on *Rise* will have the same problem here as Jimi references abound, lyrically and musically. Yet fans of this upstart's ballsy approach must applaud him for the calibre of his clone-manship. Leading with his best foot forward.

Dangerous sets the pace for the record — a highly muscular, no filler, full-blaze attack that grabs attention. A Taylor-like use of repetition creeps into the set of mostly original music, yet Turner pulls it off with songs like *Shake4Me* and *The Turner Diaries*. Likewise, *I'm A Man, I'm A Man* takes a minimalist approach but the improved quality of Turner's singing voice helps him turn in a convincing argument.

Experiments with various instruments and back-up singers are sometimes successful, sometimes not. Yet this next stage in Turner's musical *Diary* is a progressive one, depicting an artist who has much more to say, even as his style evolves in the saying.

— By Eric Thorm



Headwater

My Old Friend
Independent

These partners in musical crime have stolen my ears! As a reward for their return, I offer one glowing review. Matt Bryant and Jonas Shandels voices are so similar you'd swear they were brothers, or, if not, cosmically linked (in a cosmos of laidback roots music). Turns out they've been friends since childhood. The duo switches up guitar, banjo, and mandolin, and have a rhythm section that rolls along at walking pace. Vancouver based, it seems they yearn to escape urbanity, just look at song titles like *Lonely Trail*, *Out to the Country*, and *Nowhere Town*. Mandolin does the one-drop job in the reggae flavoured *Leaves Fall*. From start to finish, this eight song debut has a mysterious, soothing feel, never invasive, never boasting. Gordon Lightfoot, Jack Johnson, and Crosby, Stills, and Nash come to mind, but Headwater's defining fea-

ture is the amazing match of two musical soul mates. *My Old Friend* seems a very fitting title. Back to song one for another listen!

— By Mary Beth Carty

Mary Murphy A Painted Moon

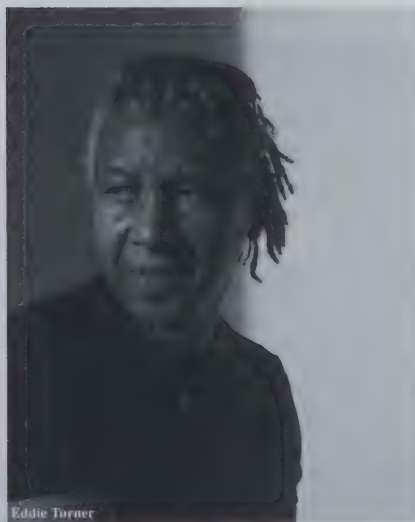
Independent
Mary Murphy's *A Painted Moon* is a well arranged and strongly performed recording dedicated to Ireland and Vancouver Island. Murphy sings in English and Gaelic and has even chosen to translate Bruce Cockburn's well-known *Wondering Where the Lions Are*. This disc also has contributions from David Francey, David Essig and Todd Butler, but they are used only lightly and not given an opportunity to contribute to their fullest ability. Of note are the arrangements of the songs, guitarist Paul Keim leads the way with his smooth swing and has featured melodic parts on a number of tunes. There are also some lovely harmonies sung by Murphy.

— By Dan Campbell

George Jones

Hits I Missed ... And
One I Didn't
Bandit Records

From the old school of traditional country music, George Jones with *Hits I Missed ... And One I Didn't* has put his cheating and hurtin' signature on twelve songs that were written and performed successfully by others like Ray Charles, Merle Haggard and Hank Williams Jr. Not just another cover CD from an American icon artist, this assemblage demonstrates why he is he class of his own. From the initial track *Funny How Time Slips Away* to the last track *He Stopped Loving Her* — the track he didn't miss. Jones puts his magic touch on each tune to recreate them as his own. This is no more evident than on Ray Charles' *Busted* with a looming fiddle in the foreground and Jones' unmistakable voice of heartbreak that would make a believer of anyone that Jones knew what being down and out was all about or that he had



Eddie Turner

experienced an unhappy home life with the blunt *Skip a Rope*, about children repeating what they hear at home. Even though they may not be originally Old Possum's tunes, this album is definitely classic Jones and with the impeccable production and instrumentation is a brilliant listen.

— By Philip Harries

Jodi Martin

15 Minutes Out to Sea
Hot Bread Records

Why do so many women with great voices and decent guitar playing skills use their talents to make half-pop recordings? Reverby voice overdubs cake up on blasting bass beats in predictable pop arrangements that build into power-ballads on many of this Australian songstress' tunes. She could easily have a pop career - she's got the

face, a beautiful emotional singing style, and non-offensive finding-myself lyrics about relationships but did she have send this to a folk music magazine in Canada?

— By Mary Beth Carty

Thea Gilmore

Songs from the Gutter
Compass

Thea Gilmore

Loft Music
Compass

Gilmore is big news in the UK and hats off to Compass for issuing her catalogue here in North America. While nominally folk, her sound is difficult to pigeon-hole, although rock, blues, punk, and country figure prominently. If pressed, I would say she evokes *Learning To Crawl*-era Chrissie Hynde (strangely enough, Robbie McIntosh, ex-Pretenders guitarist, does

appear on *Songs From The Gutter*), but Gilmore really has her own voice, a rarity in today's homogeneous pop scene. And as a first step into the music of this young and insanely productive singer-songwriter you couldn't do much better than *Songs From The Gutter*. The album consists of twelve songs, recorded over five days in 2002 for an Internet-only release and subsequently polished for wider distribution by producer/collaborator Nigel Stonier. It kicks off poetically with *Down to Nowhere* and follows with the blistering *When Did You Get So Safe?* (a scathing comment on the aforementioned pop industry). Along the way Gilmore turns in great versions of *I Dreamed I saw St. Augustine* and The Clash's *I'm Not Down*, but it's her originals you need

this album for. The album proper ends with the tender *And We'll Dance*, but then adds a couple of bonus songs and then a whole other disc of bonus rare and unreleased material. Poetic, moving, and dynamic—*Songs From The Gutter* is a great record!

Loft Music, originally released in 2003, is the less essential of the two albums—all covers. The extent to which it works for you will probably depend on how you like Gilmore's song selection—she re-works The Buzzcocks' classic *Ever Fallen in Love* as a study in downtempo moodiness and fingerpicks her way through *Bad Moon Rising* to great effect. Lesser songs by Paul Westerberg (*Hide 'n' Seekin'*) and The Ramones (*Don't Come Close*) are also included, rendering the for-

mer as an acoustic gem with a wonderful little melodica solo and the latter as a seventies pop raveout. Neil Young's *Old Laughing Lady* and Van Morrison's *Crazy Love* also show their tired faces. But it all sounds a little safe and while it makes for an entertaining "what would I have covered?" internal dialogue, I suspect it won't stay in the player as long as *Songs From The Gutter*.

— By Richard Thornley

Greg Laswell

Through Toledo
Vanguard Records

Armed with a voice like that guy from Coldplay, Greg's got the anthem-pennning-one-man-rock-genius appeal of Hawksley Workman or Joel Kroecker, but with perhaps less appeal to the folk audiences than



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the two fore-mentioned Canadians, due to songwriting that is more emotional than clever and poetic. Lyrics concern love and self-doubt and are sung with a great deal of beauty, a style that calls you to listen even above the din of the loud rock and roll that lurks behind. Laswell's a one man band for god's sake. He played all the instruments and produced, recorded, and mixed this album. He's so poly-talented and handsome, I'd be surprised if he didn't go far. But, again, this is a rock album. There's a little too much electric guitar and bashing of drums for this magazine.

— By Mary Beth Carty

John Gorka

Writing In The Margins
Red House Records

Since the late 80's, John Gorka has built a solid reputation as a singer-songwriter with a beautiful baritone voice. His newest release, *Writing in the Margins*, continues this vein.

With beautiful vocal help from Nancy Griffith, Alice Peacock and Lucy Kaplansky, these twelve

songs result in a polished piece of work. They include two very good covers — one of Townes van Zandt's *Snow don't Fall* and Stan Rogers *The Lockkeeper*.

But as lovely as it sounds — there is something unsatisfying about this collection; it sounds like Gorka's coasting — not really pushing himself or growing as he did earlier in his career. It's beautiful coasting but I somehow wanted a little more. Still, even coasting Gorka is a cut above most.

— By les siemieniuk

Sui Vesan

Merging with the Brook
World Village

Home to Yat-Kha, Toto La Momposina and Mariem Hassan, the World Village label is no stranger to striking and, at times, demanding vocal performances. It's a global family into which singer Sui Vesan fits perfectly. An experimenter in the tradition of fellow Slovak Iva Bittova, Vesan makes liberal use of an invented onomatopoeic language she calls 'tatlanina'. Sparsely accompanied by guitar or light percussion, Vesan's vocal-



Greg Laswell

izations are at times suggestive of Sami artist Mari Boine Persen. The whole package she calls 'Dadajazz', which is a largely meaningless tag... but perhaps the point. A touch uneven — some of the less focused tracks sound a little like vocal exercises — but there are beautiful moments on this recording, and always her engaging voice. The highlight for me is *Running Through the Hollow Tree*, which sounds like a vocal improvisation over one of Moondog's studies in rhythm. File — in good company — under uneasy listening.

— By Gallagher Parkinson

Shawn Mullins

9th Ward Pickin' Parlor
Vanguard

9th Ward Pickin' Parlor is named for the studio in New Orleans where Shawn Mullins recorded this disc. The studio was later destroyed by hurricane Katrina and this album has become a dedication to the music of New Orleans and the studio where some of the acoustic

tracks were recorded. It's these acoustic tracks that hold the heart and soul of this CD. They are warmly recorded with a rich depth that is often lacking in big studio hyper-clean tracks. Lyrically solid with a number of musical hooks that are sure to linger in the listeners mind this disc will be a hit for any current Shawn Mullins fans and will surely inspire many more to join him.

— By Dan Campbell

Solas

Reunion: A Decade of Solas - CD/DVD
Compass Records

A live reunion concert featuring Seamus Egan, Winifred Horan, Mick McAuley, Deirdre Scanlan and Eamonn McElholm, with founding members Karan Casey, John Doyle and John Williams, plus Donal Clancy and special guests. Doesn't that sound mouth watering? And it is too. Filmed and recorded in 2005, the collection features a 17-track audio CD as well

as a 1 hour, 45 minute DVD of the reunion concert in stereo and 5:1 surround sound mix. Also included are interviews, a photo gallery and behind the scenes footage of the rehearsals. There's a hell of a lot of music here which I still attempt to digest in full. Among my favourite songs are *Silver Dagger* and *Newry Highwayman*, whilst *Coconut Dog/Morning Dew* and *Timmy Clifford*'s shine amongst the instrumentals. This is a brilliant introduction to Solas, if you have never seen or heard them. Solas fans will already have at least one copy.

— By Tim Readman

Jon Harvison

Alibi of Innocence
IrregularRecords/Drive On

The cover informs us that 'alibi' is 'an excuse' and 'innocence' is 'without knowledge of something's significance or possible consequences'. Well it is impossible for me to excuse the flaws in this recording on the basis of it coming from an innocent. The songwriting is



Shawn Mullins

unconvincing. The language of the lyrics is clumsy and awkward in places. The sentiments are a little sweet, often sickly and occasionally mawkish. The singing lacks authority and strength. The musicianship is fine and the production is of a high enough standard. But that's not enough. Jon, you need a better alibi.

— By Tim Readman

Neil Conway

Roadblock
Funnerbunny Pro.

Newfoundland's Neil Conway is a crusader of sorts a pro-music-pirating environmentalist with a knack for writing funny songs about modernity. If audiences can get past his assumed country-bumpkin voice they will admire his hilarious and clever statements on subjects ranging from suburbs, to new country, to message managers, to hitch-hiking, to famine. One love song, sung with fellow Newf Colleen Power, even mentions his own astonishment at setting his cynicism aside for a tune, making *You & Me* perhaps all the more meaningful to the girl in question. The reggae-

flavoured title-track *Roadblock* is a protest against cars, and the album cover features a plant growing up through asphalt. See a common theme here? An enhanced section contains his 2004 release, some kitchen recordings, pictures, and album art which are all pirate-approved. The music is not too elaborate. Neil plays guitar, Pat Boyle adds some touches on trumpet, dobro, harmonica, and melodia, and Dave Rowe plays bass. As a songwriter, Neil Conway has the ability to entertain while criticising the status-quo, to make us socially aware while making us laugh. I'd even go so far as to say that he and Rae Spoon are founding members of the 'Politicoountry' movement, to coin a term. Most definitely a songwriter worthy of being covered.

— By Mary Beth Carty

Mark T.

Where Are You Going
Circle of Sound

The opening track is dreadful, a sort of cod rap that sounds like Reg Presley out of The Troggs and Steve Peregrine Took out of T. Rex having a jam. Pissed. The

version of Wild Mountain Thyme is spine chillingly awful. Amateurish codswallop.

— By Tim Readman

Andrea Beaton

The Tap Session
Independent

Andrea's third independently released CD of traditional Cape Breton fiddle music is as warm and glowing as the red and orange tones of its package. Recorded live in an evening at The Tap Inn, a pub in Birnam Scotland where she has worked for two consecutive winters, this 20-something fiddler from the famed Beaton family of Mabou puts down a selection of jigs, strathspeys, and reels that are as old as the hills, with a few of her own compositions mixed in, including a lovely clog she wrote for her dad's 50th birthday and a co-write with Gordie Sampson called *The Bush Administratoin Reel*. Troy MacGillivray's incredibly innovative piano accompaniment would impress even the jazz-afficionado, and one of his more experimental passes earn one set the title *The Airplane Landing*. Whoa! Andrea's fondness

for switching from major to minor mid-tune give these sets alot of 'oumf.' not to mention her jumpy, ornamented playing. The last track, a duet with small-piper Fin Moore is sheer musical ecstasy. Between song giggles and liner notes are so endearing, and this cd is so upbeat that you will want to hug Andrea and Troy after each cut. And you may think you can, live sound and all.

— By MaryBeth Carty

Ball & Chain & The Wreckers

Live At The Bayou
Independent

Ottawa duo Jody Benjamin and Michael Ball are the core of this band, which expands and contracts as needed. Recorded over two nights at Ottawa's Bayou Blues and Jazz Club in January 2005, this disc has a nice laid-back feel—the atmosphere of dancing in the sawdust at a late-night bar after a few beers—mixing old-time country and Cajun. They cover classics by the likes of Marty Robbins, Roger Miller, Hank Williams, John Hiatt, Steve Earle and Julie Miller

with their own wryly humorous originals. Some nice guitar and fiddle licks and Ross Murray at the knobs and switches makes it all sound so fine.

— By Barry Hammond

The John Richards Band

Walls of Hope
Working Joe Music

The human voice is the most unforgiving of musical instruments. You can get away with the odd fluffed chord or missed beat in most music, but if the singing isn't there, then there's nowt you can do. Cue one John Richards. In terms of having his songs covered by the likes of Fairport Convention and Show of Hands, Richards has been one of the English folk scene's most successful songwriters. On this outing however he falls a bit short of the mark set by those who have covered his material. There's nothing wrong with the arranging and production, or the material. There's some amazing musicians involved and the playing is great. But, try as I might, I was not convinced by the singing of either Jon or Emma Nijis.

— By Tim Readman

Danny Michel

Valhalla
Burnt Bun Music

Produced by Joao Carvalho (who's produced Hawksley Workman) and Michel, himself, and recorded both at his home and at the Bathhouse in Bath, ON, this might be the brilliant Michel's best disc yet. (Others include *Tales From The Invisible Man*, *Loving The Alien*, *In The Belly Of A Whale*, *Fibsville*, and *Clear*). It concentrates on his strengths—astonishingly original song writing



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Paula Scanlon

matched with a quirky, intimate voice, great guitar playing, a flare for getting the feeling just right, and a multi-instrumental genius that adds other sonic textures in just the right places.

Anyone who's seen Michel play live knows what a terrific performer he is and this disc captures his essence, landing somewhere between the intimacy of a demo and the polish of a full studio recording. If you've never heard him, treat yourself to this fine recording. One of the best Canadian performer-songwriters going. No kidding.

— By Barry Hammond.

William Lee Ellis

God's Tattoos
Yellow Dog Records

This is one truly eclectic collection of blues. Yet to limit a definition of Ellis' music to blues does it a disservice. Witness a collision of American folk, ragtime, bluegrass, prewar blues, country, gospel and more. Roots' music may have a new poster boy. Enter Jim Dickinson as producer and Ellis' relatively unknown stature takes on new light. A true revivalist, he carefully crafts wonderfully esoteric compositions that eventually stick to you like gum to a shoe—eschewing a stylistic sense of bringing new life to

old forms. The fact that you cannot quite get a handle of where he's going makes him all the more essential as songs like the jubilant *Search My Heart* team up with the perky, backporch blues of *Four Horses*, furthering his impressionistic canvas without borders. *Here Am I, Lord Send Me* features a duet with his wife that updates the John Hurt classic to chilling effect. Likewise, the hauntingly beautiful *Dust Will Write My Name* takes two guitars and rudimentary percussion and elevates an acoustic ballad into something almost otherworldly. Contrast this with the title track—a rhumbafused original built on man's own inhumanity to himself. Frighteningly fresh and refreshingly tasty!

— By Eric Thom

Iain "Fred" Smith

Bagarap Empires
Independent CD

Iain "Fred" Smith

Bougainville Sky DVD
Directed by Nick Agafonoff
Ronin Films

In 2000, Australia brokered a peace between warring factions on the Papua New Guinea Island of Bougainville. To monitor and aid the settlement, they set up the world's first unarmed peace keeping op-

eration, sending in 50 people to help the fragile peace blossom. Australian singer songwriter Iain Smith was one of them.

His five-year experience with the people and troubles of Bougainville, form the base of the songs on *Bagarap Empire*. It is an amazing piece of work. Truly folk music at its best—chronicling a period in a peoples' history that few of us know anything about.

Iain does a masterful job with this twelve-song collection. *When She Cries* is a hauntingly frightening yet achingly beautiful song told from the perspective of a soldier that takes revenge for the rape of his wife.

Now there's something in her eyes/something constant and persistent/even lying 'tween her thighs/she is somewhere in the distance/Friends you say we won the war, but I'm telling you that depends/for her it never ends.

To try to put the things he saw down in song must have been a wrenching experience and probably cannot come close to the reality. But Smith is a good writer and performer. *Bagarap*

Empires, it is a noble effort and a wonderful musical achievement.

Bougainville Sky is a DVD of a documentary look at the troubles and Smith's experiences as a peace-keeper. It provides historical background information and helps put the songs on the CD in perspective, but doesn't ever come close to evoking the emotions the song do.

— By les siemieniuk

Pauline Scanlon

Hush
Compass Records

Pauline Scanlon came to most people's attention as the singer in Sharon Shannon's band. This is her second solo outing. Expertly produced by former Lúnasa guitarist, Donogh Hennessy, this is a fine selection, mainly of traditional Irish songs. Hennessy's percussive and driving guitar is predominant throughout. There's an impressive array of talented musicians featured here, including Danny Thompson and Stuart Duncan. It is Scanlon's voice that steals the show, however. It has strength and depth aplenty, in spite of the fact that her delivery is always delicate,

often breathy, and sometimes whispered. It has a personal quality and an intimacy that's most alluring. It is the perfect vehicle for the material here and has the effect of pulling the listener in closer to catch each turn of phrase. Top shelf!

— By Tim Readman

Dr. John

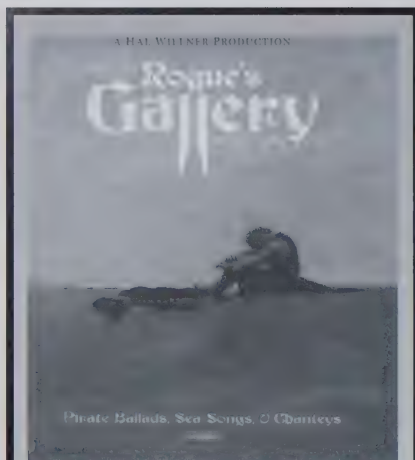
Mercenary
Parlophone/EMI

This seems like a natural match—New Orleans musician Dr. John doing an album of songs from distinctive southern songwriter, Johnny Mercer. The interesting thing is this isn't an album of lush, romantic. The good doctor puts a distinctly modern touch on Mercer. The arrangements are more about basing the songs on funky, off-kilter New Orleans rhythms than on being nostalgic. While rhythm might not be what people associate with Mercer, you'll think again hearing old chestnuts like *I'm An Old Cowhand*, *Moon River* and *That Old Black Magic* get a new injection of dark, sexy, danceable life courtesy of the master of hip-shaking funk.

— By Barry Hammond.



William Lee Ellis
penguin eggs 67



Various Artists

Rogue's Gallery:
Pirate Ballads, Sea
Songs & Chanteys
Anti

How bizarre. How utterly, beautifully bizarre. Forty-three traditional folk songs spread over two discs by a motley crew that simply boggles the mind by the breadth of its disparity. Lou Reed, Brian Ferry, Jarvis Cocker, Nick Cave rub shoulders with the more familiar folk faces of Martin and Eliza Carthy, Loudon Wainwright III, Richard Thompson and Lucinda Williams. Sting and Bono have also been at this folk caper before.

The idea to make *Rogue's Gallery* came from film director Gore Verbinski while making the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. It starred actor Johnny Depp and he and Verbinski signed on as executive producers.

Hal Willner – often credited as the inventor of the 'modern' tribute album – actually did the

leg-work. It was a massive undertaking and one fraught with danger. And there is the odd piss-take. Actor David Thomas is clearly playing at silly buggers on *What Should We Do With The Drunken Sailor*. There are also several predictable attempts at the likes of *Little Boy Blue* (Ralph Steadman) or *Caroline And Her Young Sailor* (Andrea Corr). And yet, by and large, there's a marvelous spirit of adventure aboard this project. From Lou Reed's chilling *Leave Her Johnny (Leave Her)* to Loudon Wainwright III's smart-aleck, racy *Good Ship Venus*, Willner has taken a no-holds-barred approach to these centuries-old songs. He has even coaxed the enigmatic Mary Margaret O'Hara out of retirement to tackle a credible, *The Cry Of Man*. Highlights, are numerous but the superbly spartan Waterson-Carthy *Hog-Eye Man* tops this treasure trove, surely.

– By Roddy Campbell

Various Artists

Alberta Wild Roses Northern Lights Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

For many, Alberta, Canada is oil and gas country and the Calgary Stampede, and not known for being very heavy in the music department, but this compilation from Smithsonian Folkways, *Alberta Wild Roses Northern Lights* introduces listeners to some of the very best contemporary singer-songwriters and musicians that Alberta has to offer. This album explores a diverse culture and gives the listener a musical ride through Wild Rose Country. The panorama is highlighted with energetic country, roots, fiddle and folk music with the likes of Corb Lund, k.d. lang, Tim Hus, The Swifts and Ian Tyson. However, Alberta music is not all country and western. This 100-year old province has also been influenced by early European pioneers, French Canadian settlers and its aboriginal origins. So it is no surprise to find examples of these cultures with The Kubasonics, an Alberta Ukrainian Polka band, or Lé Twés representing Alberta's Francophone community or Asani performing in their aboriginal tongues. *Alberta Wild Roses Northern Lights* is a wonderful collection and tribute to a young and vibrant province.

– By Philip Harries

Various Artists

Scotland: The Music And Song – A 20-Year Profile of Greentrax

In 1986 Ian Green decided on early retirement from the police force in Scotland. You can just imagine Green telling friends and neighbours, "I'm going to take my

pension money and start a record company." Those folks could not have been faulted for thinking that he had lost the plot. Thank heavens for the vision and courage of people like Ian Green. Twenty years later Greentrax Records has become the home for the best traditional musicians and singers in Scotland. Its roster boasts of the likes of Shoooglenifty, Dick Gaughan, Ali Bain and Malinky. To celebrate this landmark occasion, Ian Green has just released a superb three-disc compilation. Disc One represents the best from the first decade; Two covers the cutting-edge artists; and Three features the best of the past ten years. I sat in my living room and cried big tears hearing the late Davy Steele sing again. And that was only the first track. This gem of a collection ought to have a special place in any record collection.

– By Jimmy Connors

Various Artists

The Rough Guide to the Music of Iran
Rough Guide

Thanks to a conservative clergy and an outspoken president, Iran is officially Axis of Evil these days, but check out the music of the people, and impressions may change. In this compendium there resonates a sample of the joyousness and introspection of traditions reaching back thousands of years.

There are folk songs, including one from legendary singer Haj Ghorban Soleiman, contemporary pop music from both sanctioned and underground groups, regional music from Armenians, Azeris, Kurds like Kayhna Kalhor and Shahrar Nazeri, songs set to old Sufi poems, and a

knockout closing track from super-group Masters of Persian Music, who include the wildly popular vocalist Shahjarian. Stunning and scary, it's a great wrap to a heady yet fascinating selection of music from a very different culture.

– By David Ingram

Various Artists

Turkish groove
Putumayo

Turkey, geographically, is the bridge between the Middle East, Europe, and the Balkans. All three regions are represented here, albeit showing a heavy European influence. Overwhelmingly, the sound is disco-dance. Fortunately, it's all very modern, some with a flair that echos some of the DJs coming out of the region in recent years. Other songs have a Europop flavour, including Buda, who is fast becoming a superstar and deservedly so.

– By Shawna Biamonte

Various Artists

Rough Guide to Urban Latino
Rough Guide

When they say urban, they mean "not folk music". This album is the popular music that can be found in Central and South America, the kind they play at dances and parties. While here "urban" brings up slick and cheesy R'n'B, thankfully this record is mostly free of that sort of thing. Think reggaeton, cumbia, hip-hop. Think the fabulous ska hybrids of Ska Cubano and Doctor Krapula. Think the shoe-gazer-esque rock of El Otro yo del Otro Yo. Think the hard-hitting rap of Zona Marginal. Think "I must pick up this album for my next party".

– By Shawna Biamonte



North Coast Fisher Wife's Prayer

Words and Music

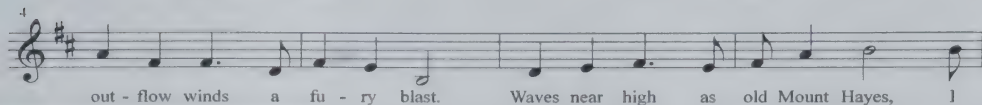
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Phyllis Sinclair

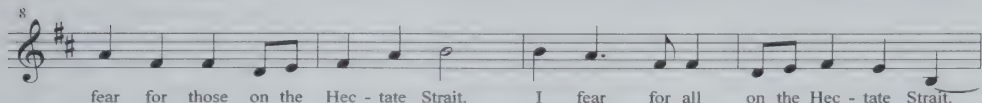
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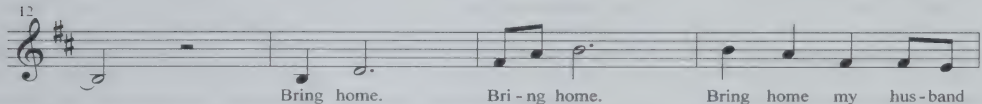
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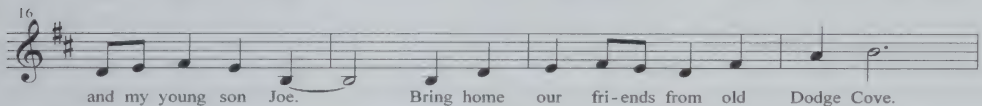
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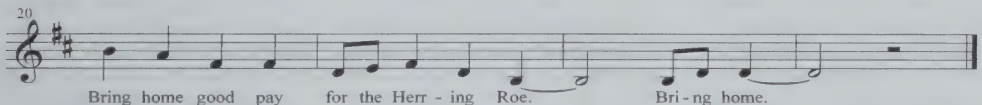
D G D Bm



F#m G D Bm F#m G



D Bm F#m G D



The Hectate boils hard in a winter squall,
Writes names on plaques of Mariner's Wall
Lucy, Holland Rock, Cape St. James,
Cast out your lights upon the waves,
Cast out your lights upon the waves, and

North East Winds would you spare the lives
Of husbands and sons of fisher wives?
Who ply their trade with net and cage
For wages on the tallyman's page
For wages on the tallyman's page

Now ease my mind as I lay down,
Bring peace to the minds of this fishing town
Return our loved to old Cow Bay
Return them safe, Dear God, I pray
Return them safe, Dear God, I pray

Bring home, Bring home,
Bring home my husband and my young son, Joe
Bring home our friends from old Dodge Cove
Bring home good pay for the Herring Roe,
Bring Home

Bring home, Bring home,
Bring home my husband and my young son, Joe
Bring home our friends from old Dodge Cove
Bring home good pay for the Herring Roe,
Bring Home

Bring home, Bring home,
Bring home my husband and my young son, Joe
Bring home our friends from old Dodge Cove
Bring home good pay for the Herring Roe,
Bring Home

The Scottish folk singer Dick Gaughan once said that for every thousand songwriters, you needed a thousand interpreters; otherwise, when the writer of the song dies, the song dies along with them. Penguin Eggs is determined to cultivate and strengthen interest in the creation of quality folk songs by printing score sheets to inspirational songs. This time around, we've included Phyllis Sinclair's superb *North Coast Fisher Wife's Prayer*, recorded on her debut release *Fence Posts And Stones*. For more information on this disc go to phyllissinclair.com. Massive thanks to Phyllis for very kindly allowing us to reprint it here. And, as always, much thanks to John Minter for transcribing the notes and words with the usual supreme grace under pressure.

L'escouade Vocale

Le trio a capella Québécois, Serre L'Écoute, recherche et enregistre d'obscures chansons marines traditionnelles, découvertes sur les rives du Saint-Laurent. Yves Bernard estime que leurs chants sont marquants et à l'épreuve du temps.

Au début de l'été, le trio Serre L'Écoute lançait *Fortunes et Pertitions*, un superbe deuxième disque. Un disque de chant ancien avec des voix qui semblent provenir de très loin dans le temps, même si elles véhiculent une voix contemporaine pour la musique traditionnelle québécoise. Avec les Charbonniers de l'Enfer et Galant tu perds ton Temps, le groupe édifie l'une des pointes du triangle de l'art vocal traditionnel au Québec. Mais chacune de ces formations se démarque l'une de l'autre alors que les trois membres de Serre L'Écoute chantent souvent à capella à trois étages, à l'unisson ou en harmonie, alternent les solos, pour suivent les réponses jusqu'au couplet suivant. L'instrumentation ne fait jamais oublier l'essentiel et les arrangements demeurent sobres et dénudés. Un violon, un accordéon, une guitare ou un bouzouki accompagneront discrètement. Un harmonica bluesera de façon minimale. Dans tous les cas, la voix est projetée en avant-plan.

L'aventure de Serre L'Écoute commence en 1998 alors que l'association bretonne le Chasse-Marée demande à l'ethnologue Robert Bouthillier, alors installé en Bretagne, de collaborer à la production de l'album *Chants et Complaintes maritimes des Terres françaises d'Amérique*, pour sa collection *Anthologie des Chansons de Mer*. Le projet représente un réel défi, puisque le Québec, contrairement à la Bretagne, L'Angleterre et les États-Unis, ne compte pas d'artistes spécialisés dans ce genre de répertoire. « Nous étions une colonie, explique Bouthillier. Les flottes étaient celles des métropoles et nous n'avions pas de grands équipages : seulement trois ou quatre marins à la fois pour la pêche côtière ». Le chant de manoeuvre pour les grands baleiniers ou autres navires de courses en haute mer, qui est l'apanage des groupes outre-Atlantique de chants de marins, nous était pratiquement inconnu. Mais des complaintes maritimes ou des chansons historiques évoquant les voyages ou la navigation sur les Saint-Laurent furent dénichées.

Le disque paraît en 2000, suite à deux ans de recherches, témoignant de la richesse insoupçonnée de ce type de thématique. Des chansons ontariennes, québécoises, acadiennes, terre-neuviennes et louisianaises s'y retrouvent. L'une des pièces est interprétée par Gabrielle Bouthillier, fille de Robert qui poursuit sur les traces du paternel, et accompagnée Liette Remon, excellente vio-

loneuse, porteuse d'un riche héritage familial instrumental gaspésien. Les deux en sont à leur première collaboration. Les deux se retrouveront plus tard au sien de l'ensemble de musique ancienne Strada. Les deux se joindront à Robert pour la formation de Serre L'Écoute.

Chants et Complaintes maritimes des Terres françaises d'Amérique avait créé la demande. En 2001, un groupe de commande prend forme. Des festivals les réclament : Paimpol en Bretagne et Saint-Jean Port-Joli au Québec. Chansons des Bords du Saint-Laurent, un premier album autoproduit est lancé en 2002. Mais, si Serre L'Écoute poursuit dans la veine des chants de marins, il établit dès lors une mise en garde, se définissant d'abord comme un groupe de musiciens traditionnels qui s'intéressent à la matière et non à un seul thème. Un élargissement de l'inventaire des sources est donc à prévoir. Cela se concrétise avec la parution de *Fortunes et Pertitions*, grâce auquel la formation se donne un rendez-vous avec la destinée bonne ou mauvaise, en mettant le cap sur les côtes québécoises et acadiennes.

« On a recherché des mélodies qui nous plaisaient sans intention thématique. On a retenu des chansons à écouter ou à répondre, des complaintes, des airs que l'on peut harmoniser, des textes dramatiques, tragiques, romanesques, mais aussi plus rigolo. On a voulu montrer la diversité des styles et des esthétiques, de même que les différentes façons de les décliner, explique Bouthillier ».

À l'époque, ces pièces pouvaient être chantées dans toutes les situations. « Avant l'avènement de la radio ou de la télé, le seul divertissement était la chanson, poursuit l'ethnologue. Elle surgissait dans toutes sortes de circonstances, en accompagnant le quotidien des gens. Des chanteurs m'ont dit que lorsque tu travaillais sur une charpente en faisant des maisons, tu chantonais toute la journée pour meubler ton esprit. Les chansons

drôles ou friponnes pouvaient faire partie des partys. Mais si tu prends des complaintes comme Le jour de l'Assomption ou l'empoisonneuse qui sont tragiques, je les ai collecté comme ça. Les gens les chantaient dans des contextes très intimes ».

En resserrant l'écoute, on a l'impression que les membres du trio chantent comme on le faisait dans le temps, en se collant le plus souvent et très fidèlement à la source première, loin de l'influence ultérieure qu'ont exercé des instruments comme la guitare ou le piano. « C'est exact, confirme Robert. Notre inspiration première vient du terrain, de la collecte, de l'a capella. Si on travaille l'harmonie vocale, on n'entre pas pour autant dans une esthétique chorale. On tient à préserver une assise essentiellement naturelle. On n'a pas des voix de têtes, mais plutôt celles de chanteurs normaux ». Mais jusqu'à quel point Serre L'Écoute reproduit-il le son d'époque? « L'histoire transparait dans l'intonation, le traitement de l'émission du son. On ornemente pas mal, mais dans l'esprit de la tradition. On peut chanter de façon très syllabique en faisant vibrer quelques notes, mais à la façon des anciens chanteurs acadiens. On ne va toutefois pas jusqu'à tenter de reproduire l'accent. Par contre, si on reste collés à une esthétique vocale qui est celle des chanteurs de tradition orale, on décline musicalement un peu autrement ».

Parfois, pour enrichir un texte, le groupe se permet de faire des versions de synthèse. « Ce n'est pas un travail d'ethnologue, mais bien celui d'un artiste. Il nous arrive de créer une version à partir de plusieurs variantes qui sont toutes fragmentaires les unes des autres. On fait alors quelque chose qui est le plus complet possible dans l'état actuel de notre connaissance de la chanson. Cet exercice commande également une cohérence dans le vocabulaire. Nous devons faire des choix ».

En attendant le prochain album qui portera sur le thème de la boisson, ne reste qu'à apprécier l'excellence de *Fortunes et Pertitions*.



Serre L'Écoute

Chants de Rédemption

L'héritage Acadien de Lennie Gallant l'a inspiré à écrire et enregistrer en français. Fish Grigowsky nous parle de l'excellent nouvel album de Gallant, When We Get There, et de son récent voyage en Afghanistan.

Maître du métaphore, Lennie Gallant est assis confortablement dans la petite maison de sa soeur, écrivant des chansons, une fois de plus, sur l'I-P-É. Chez lui. "Des bouts de chansons, au moins," rit-il. Mais c'est un début!

Il revient tout juste de quelques ateliers au Edmonton Folk Fest, où nous avons pu discuter un peu - sa voix douce, un tantinet acadienne, était quelque peu émue par un chanteur de charme anonyme, qui surplombait la plus célèbre colline musicale d'Alberta. Depuis quelques jours, il se tient dans des lieux qui lui sont plus familiers de par ses tournées estivales, qu'il appelle "tournées yo-yo." Il semble maintenant plus détendu; c'est bon revenir chez soi!

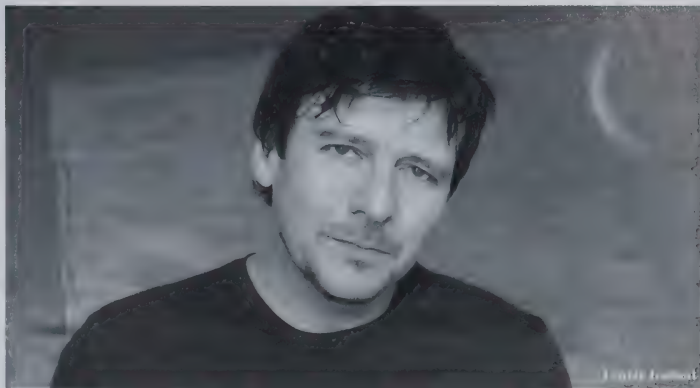
Gallant vient d'une famille nombreuse de la Côte Nord de l'île, dans le village de Rustico, formé il y a longtemps par des Acadiens désintéressés par la capture et la déportation par les Anglais pendant la guerre de sept ans.

"Je m'intéressais beaucoup au hockey," explique-t-il, citant également la justice aveugle des bandes-dessinées Daredevil de Marvel, pour l'aider à passer ses premières saisons. "Comme la plupart des enfants Canadiens. Hockey de rue l'été, hockey sur glace l'hiver. J'ai eu une guitare vers 13 ans. Je suis tout simplement tombé amoureux, et j'ai commencé à composer presque aussitôt. J'écrivais des chansons avant d'apprendre des accords".

Avant de travailler les perspectives sensibles et un peu croches qu'il véhicule maintenant, Gallant écrivait des chansons traitant de "djouer des forces que je ne saisisais sans doute mal. J'avais 14 ans, et j'essayais d'écrire des chansons d'amour, un sujet qui m'était alors inconnu. Mais au départ, j'étais un grand fan de Bob Dylan et Gordon Lightfoot." Deux grands mentors, des conteurs qui, comme Gallant, portent leurs âmes de façon non-indulgente.

Il poursuit: "La communauté dans laquelle j'ai grandi était bien intéressante - principalement Acadienne, mais la langue fut perdue dans le temps de mes grands-parents. C'est malheureux, parce qu'il y a d'autres communautés Acadiennes qui ont su la garder. On était une petite communauté entourée d'anglais. Mais elle refait surface. Mes neveux vont à une école française, et parlent mieux que moi."

"Je ne parlais pas un mot de français avant la vingtaine. J'ai commencé à fréquenter des amis Acadiens. On avait été élevé de façon semblable,



mais il y avait un mur qui me suivait quand j'en-trais dans une pièce...ils se mettaient à parler en anglais pour moi. Ça me rendait dingue, parce que je savais que j'étais en quelque sorte le problème à l'époque. J'ai donc appris le français, essayant à travers la musique, l'écriture de chansons en français, e même un album complet, ce qui a été une des choses les plus difficiles à entreprendre de toute ma vie. Je suis content de l'avoir fait, c'était très amusant et plutôt un succès."

Il est maintenant rendu à sept albums, When We Get There répondant à quelques questions rhétoriques sur le voyage. Pour la force de son travail, et à sa grande surprise, on demanda à Gallant de jouer pour les troupes Canadiennes en Afghanistan. "Le gouvernement m'a appelé."

C'était très discret, avec un membre de chaque parti - Peter Mackay, Alexa McDonough, et Byron Wilfert. Ils ont demandé à George Canyon, et m'ont demandé si j'irais avec seulement ma guitare? Ils m'ont dit que j'avais quelques heures pour décider, et qu'on partait le jour après demain. "Oh, et tu ne peux le dire à personne, à cause des dignitaires!"

"Bien sûr que je voulais y aller. Je ne l'ai dit à personne, mes parents l'ont appris aux nouvelles. C'était un assez gros choc - j'étais aux nouvelles nationales en plein milieu de l'Afghanistan." Il imite son père: "Mais qu'est-ce que...!?"

"J'ai été très impressionné par le courage des gens que j'ai connu là-bas. L'intelligence et la ténacité qu'ils dégageaient. Toutes mes convictions personnelles sur la situation mises de côté, j'étais là pour laisser souffler les soldats."

Cela nous mène vers la politique pour quelques moments, Gallant se montrant particulièrement impressionné par des révélations de An Inconvenient Truth d'Al Gore, qu'il aurait cru "prêcher aux convertis." C'est un thème qu'il avait exploré dans sa nouvelle chanson I Want to Save the World for You. Il avoue même que s'il pouvait choisir un super pouvoir, il aurait un type de souffle magique pour refroidir les calottes glaciaires.

Mais au fond, il doit y avoir une histoire à l'intérieur de chaque chanson. C'est ce qui fait son charme.

"J'aime être créatif. Je ressens une charge incroyable lorsque je m'assois pour écrire une chanson, surtout quand tout marche à merveille. C'est génial comme idée que de la partager sur une scène, et voir les gens réagir."

The Innkeeper, par exemple, pourrait sembler conter l'histoire d'un des premiers convertis chrétiens. Mais Gallant explique que c'est beaucoup plus profond qu'une simple tournure de la Nativité. "C'est une chanson de rédemption. Quelqu'un qui a été si caché au fond de lui-même, sans laisser pénétrer l'amour ou le pardon, un personnage vil qui renvoie les arrivants, et qui se fait pardonner après tout. Plusieurs d'entre nous ont déjà joué ce rôle à un moment ou un autre - Je l'ai certainement fait."

There Must Be Another Song parle de résurrection - celle d'un instrument: "C'est drôle, j'ai un ami à Halifax qui travaille sur les guitares depuis des années. Il s'est déjà occupé des miennes, incluant une petite double-o Martin 1954, sur laquelle j'ai composé la majorité de mes chansons. Je l'ai invité à souper un soir et nous avons parlé de sa vie dans l'industrie. Il est parti aux alentours de minuit et je voulais écrire une chanson qui parlait de lui. Mais la chanson n'a finalement pas du tout parlé de lui, mais plutôt d'un personnage qui trouve une guitare dans une enchère et qui doit à tout prix la ressusciter. Je l'ai terminée vers 4h du matin, je l'ai enregistrée sur cassette pour la lui envoyer, puisqu'il m'avait en quelque sorte inspiré. Mais il m'a réécrit en disant 'Comment pouvais-tu connaître cette histoire?'"

"Parfois tu ne te sens pas comme le compositeur - tu te sens comme le vaisseau de la chanson. Elle existe en dehors de toi, d'une certaine façon. Ça m'arrive souvent dans les boutiques de guitares. Avec le bois, il y a une certaine énergie résiduelle. Tu prends une guitare, et tu sens une chanson cachée à l'intérieur, qui t'attend."

Traduction: Henry Myers



Sunparlour Players

Hymns for the Happy
Independant

Dieu est mort et les Sunparlour Players l'ont tué! Cette armée musicale post-moderne de deux utilise des banjos, guitares acoustiques, glockenspiels, tambours et autre pour créer des pièces Dionysiennes sauvages qui ont parfois, plutôt étrangement, des paroles religieuses (Dyin Today). Avec la furie acoustique des Neutral Milk Hotel, l'esthétique indie de Wilco, et la créativité instrumentale de Plywood 34, les très ingénieux Andrew Penner et Mark Schachowsky empruntent de l'inspiration lyrique aux paysages ruraux et à la répétition folklorique (John had a Bell and a Whistle). Avec une section de cors délirante, Be The One a un son "garage-dixieland". Malgré tout ça, il se trouve sur l'album trois pistes relativement calmes et sincères. C'est un excellent enregistrement-maison, et félicitations à Andy Maggofin, de The House of Miracles, pour le mixage. Les Sunparlour Players sont déchaînés, et ça sonne merveilleusement.

Nietzsche serait fier.

— Par Mary Beth Carty

— Traduction: Henry Myers

John McSherry & Donal O'Connor

Tripswitch
Compass

Mon dieu, que cette musique est glorieuse! De l'appel insistant de la guitare dans la marche d'ouverture à la douce religiosité de la piste cachée, il n'y a rien qui déplaie par rapport à Tripswitch. Dans ce monde inondé de "culture" celtique (Un shamponing celtique, quelqu'un? Un savon?), ça fait du bien que d'entendre quelque chose de VRAI. John McSherry (flûte et cornemuse) et Donal O'Connor (violin et clavier) le sont réellement. Par moments vous croirez entendre Lunasa, mais le duo ne reproduit pas la densité sonore du groupe, et ils produisent aussi une certaine excitation que l'on ne retrouve plus chez Lunasa depuis un bon moment. Vous n'avez qu'à écouter la pièce titulaire, parfaite en soi, ou vous enlever avec "Johnny Going to Céili" où la cornemuse et le violon sont sans faille. Chapeau aux invités, également, qui sont intégraux au son de Tripswitch et qui ont eu toute la place nécessaire pour ajouter leur touche personnelle, comme sur la gigue asturienne, "Muñeira d'Anton", où les guitaristes Rubén Bada et Paul McSherry occupent 2 minutes complètes avant d'être accompagnés par la flûte et le violon. Merveilleux! Plusieurs critiques ont déjà proclamé celui-ci comme étant un des meilleurs disques irlandais de l'année. Je ne peux qu'acquiescer.

Par Richard Thornley

Traduction: Henry Myers

Rae Spoon & Rodney DeCoo

Trucker's Memorial
Northern Electric

Les albums country de duos gars-fille sont de toute beauté, et ce disque ne fait pas exception à la règle. Avec quatre chansons de DeCoo, cinq compositions originales de Spoon et une version longue de In The Pines, Trucker's Memorial est un disque idéal à écouter un lendemain de brosse en faisant des muffins. Rappelant George Jones et Tammy Wynette, principalement parce que les voix de Spoon et DeCoo sont tout aussi puissantes et indéniablement uniques. Et même sans les liens romantiques qui pouvaient inspirer Jones et Wynette, ils réussissent tout de même à entourer leur relation d'une certaine intrigue (surtout dans Brandon) à travers des histoires lyriques et l'émotion vocale. Rae, surtout, laisse deviner ce qu'ils pourraient devenir: elle laisse même Rodney chanter sa chanson Sweet Mr. Daniels. Les harmonies sont absolument remarquables et les pièces se suivent parfaitement. Débile.

— Par Mary Beth Carty

Traduction: Henry Myers

k.d. lang

Reintarnation
Rhino WTV 73366

Avec Reintarnation, k.d. lang, gagnante d'un prix Grammy pour Meilleure Performance Vocale Pop Feminine en 1992, a fait un retour en arrière pour rendre hommage à ses racines. Reintarnation est le dernier arrêt du voyage country de Lang. Bien qu'elle ne sache où sa musique l'emmènera, elle est fière de son parcours dans le country. Cette collection de vingt chansons, recouvrant une période de sept ans débutant en 1984, capture sa voix unique, son énergie et sa brillance vocale qui l'aidait à interpréter et définir sa vision de la musique country. Elle ne s'est jamais vue comme une chanteuse country, mais après avoir entendue Patsy Cline, elle fut changée: les vêtements, le son ainsi que la vision qu'elle avait des cultures américaines et canadiennes. Malgré tous ses changements musicaux, ce "Best of" en quelque sorte, démontre

qu'elle n'a jamais oublié ses débuts qui l'ont éventuellement rendue célèbre. Lang a récemment fait le focus sur des arrangements musicaux grandioses, mais Reintarnation est une image fixe d'une artiste qui a sans aucun doute laissé sa marque sur la musique country.

— Par Philip Harries

— Traduction: Henry Myers

Serre L'Écoute

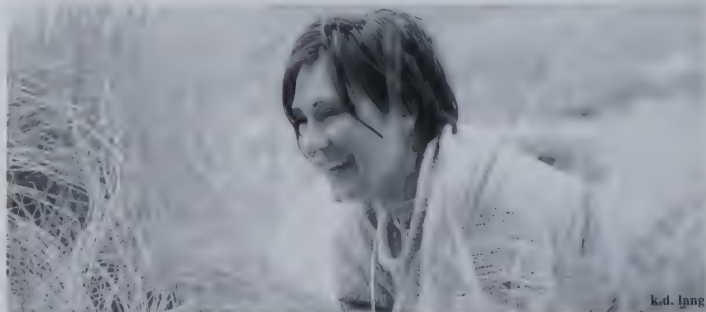
Fortunes et Perditions
Scorbut

Après leur concert au festival FIAT de Québec, je me suis lancée vers la table de disques pour acheter leur album de 2002 comme cadeau pour ma mère. Finalement, j'ai décidé de le garder...

Et soyez certains que je vais garder Fortunes et Perditions, aussi. Comparable en portée ainsi qu'en talent à Finest Kind, le trio de Québec, Serre L'Écoute, est constitué de véritables étoiles tels Gabrielle Bouthillier, accordéoniste et arrangeur musical avec la voix folk parfaite, son père Robert, folkloriste avec de magiques et puissantes cordes vocales, ainsi que leur amie Liette Remon, également reconnue pour son talent au violon. Se concentrant sur le chant à cappella, le trio emploie de nombreuses techniques - des intervalles harmoniques inhabituels, l'unisson, les drônes et le chant en solo rendent le disque intéressant du début à la fin. La version de Robert de Dessus le pont de Nantes fait étrangement "blues" avec un invité à l'harmonica, la chanson dialoguée Jeanette est amusante et accrocheuse, le duo accordéon-voix de Liette et Gabrielle dans Le pêcheur et la jardinière est touchant, et bon nombre de ballades sont simplement magnifiques. L'unique Jean-Philippe Reny apporte de la guitare et du bouzouki à quelques pièces. À tous les enthousiastes d'harmonies vocales: Serre L'Écoute vous émerveillera, vous surprendra et vous impressionnera. Et à pour les amateurs de la chanson traditionnelle québécoise, ces trésors récoltés à même les archives ancestrales seront des découvertes.

— Par Mary Beth Carty

— Traduction: Henry Myers



k.d. lang

Quadrille des ancêtres

trad.

A

Violin

B

* Cette fois, les deux airs sont traditionnels. La première pièce, qui est aussi connue sous le nom de reel des vieux, m'a été apprise par une de mes élèves. La deuxième pièce vient d'une cassette de répertoire fait-maison enregistrée par un violoniste anglais inconnu... vive les grands ménages!

* This time both tunes are traditional. The first one, which is a standard at my weekly session in Montreal, I learned from a student of mine. The second one comes from a homemade tape by an unknown fiddler that was lost and found behind a couch at Genticorum's Yann Falquet's place.

Émile Benoit

trad.

A

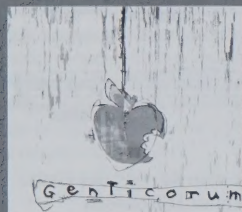
B

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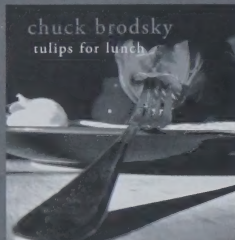
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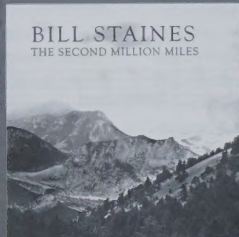
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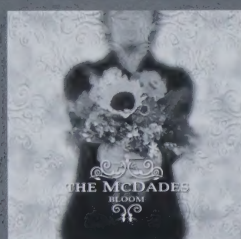
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